

# NATURAL THEOSOPHY

By Ernest Wood

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## PREFACE

[Page 7] A friend, having looked over the proofs of this volume, cried out, "Good heavens! Why have you put the word theosophy on this beautiful book?" He did not see why any label should be attached to the views expressed herein. They could be held by anybody, he said, without his belonging to any sect; Emerson, for example, had this outlook. "Precisely", I agreed, but this understanding of life should have a name which indicates the opposite of every kind of materialism, both scientific and religious, and theosophy is the old word for that, honored by centuries of use". It indicates the direct study of the status and source of life, without any acceptance of dogma or tradition. Emerson experimented with the word "transcendentalist"; "theosophist" would have been a more comprehensive term.

This book is divided into two parts. It brings together the material of *The New Theosophy*, a small volume published in America last year, and *Natural Theosophy*, a series of articles which I wrote for *The Theosophist*. Both these have been revised, and I hope that such few repetitions as remain will not be tedious. The term "natural theosophy" is used in contrast to "revealed theosophy". Theosophy cannot be revealed, as is so often assumed. Occult knowledge may be [Page 8] announced or revealed, by those who are in a position to conduct the necessary research, and such "revelations" are useful when they can bear critical examination, and win the assent of reason. But they have never the utility of the science of life which is theosophy, and which can be derived as well from a study of the things visible to the ordinary senses of man, as from the objects of any extra organs of sense developed by special persons. This, I hope, will be made clear in the exposition that constitutes this book. Theosophy enquires what life is, what is its relation to its environment, and what will be the results of that relation.

The world thinks of theosophy as belief in

- (1) Reincarnation, or rebirth on earth.
- (2) Karma, or the repayment in such rebirth of all good and ill; and
- (3) Evolution, or the progress of the soul through experience in the course of these rebirths.

The implications in connection with these are

(1) That a man is not his body, which is only an instrument; that he survives death unchanged, and lives on in finer forms or “higher planes” between death and rebirth.

(2) That a man reaps as he sows; there is nothing gained without effort, but nothing once gained can be lost or taken away.

(3) That the world is a school for man, wherein he can develop to his perfection, on the attainment [Page 9] of which he need reincarnate no more; nevertheless, there are some who have reached this liberation who do reincarnate in order to help others, and these are Adepts or Masters.

There are very sound arguments in support of all these ideas. They may be found in many books. Coupling with these the great amount of solid evidence that exists in favor of belief in subtle bodies, higher planes, clairvoyant powers, and Adepts, this outlook upon life has unquestionably great weight of both reason and testimony on its side. [ See such books as *Clairvoyance and Materialization* by G Geley, [\*The Occult World\*](#) by A P Sinnett, *Old Diary Leaves* by H S Olcott, *Some New Evidence of Human Survival* by Drayton Thomas, *Psychic Structures* by J Crawford]. In addition it provides the scope that men feel that they need — relieving the mind of the bondage of chance, the heart of the pains of separation, and the will of the incubus of servitude to circumstances or to a superior will.

Yet these ideas are often held materialistically, and thus they miss the real point and the virtue of theosophy. Theosophy is the deeper belief that we are all in touch directly with the heart of life. It is *the* antithesis to materialism, whether in science or in religion. Theosophy is not a religion, or if it is, it is the one religion in the world. In it every man is his own priest, and intermediaries between [Page 10] him and God are impossible. This is easy to prove, for if we ask a true Christian, or Buddhist, or Hindu, whether he would follow Christ, or Buddha, or Krishna, if that being had taught and shown selfishness, untruth and ugliness, his answer would be that certainly he would not. Then we could say to him: “You are no follower of Christ, or Buddha, or Krishna, or even of a God. You are a follower of goodness, truth and beauty. You are a judge of gods, and you measure them by your own ideals”. There is surely no other religion, or means of union. More and more men are releasing themselves from narrow tyrannies because they recognize the god within, who sits in judgment on the entire world. Many men have done the same thing, but the theosophist is he who knows that he has done it, and therefore gives himself the name of theosophist, which is “God-knower”.

I have called the new theosophy that which makes clear at every point that all forms are in the life and are less than the life, and that never is the life held or supported or carried

in or by the forms. In the light of this essential truth, so often neglected, reincarnation, karma and evolution take on an entirely new appearance, and knowledge of their true effects in our lives invests us with new power and freedom.

This is what may be called metaphysical or beyond form, but that is what life is. It is not a material condition that we are considering, but life [Page 11] lived as such in the midst of forms which are less, not more, than itself. Madame Blavatsky expressed the need of this outlook when she wrote in *The Secret Doctrine* (1.192), referring to the doctrine of the evolution of the monads and the worlds: “Unfortunately, there are few who are inclined to handle these doctrines only metaphysically. Even the best of the Western writers upon our doctrine declares in his work, when speaking of the evolution of the monads, that on pure metaphysics of that sort we are not now engaged. And in such case, as the Teacher remarks in a letter to him: Why this preaching of our doctrines, all this up-hill work and swimming in adversum flumen ? Why should the West .....learn.....from the East.....that which can never meet the requirements of the special tastes of the aesthetics ? And he draws his correspondent's attention 'to the formidable difficulties encountered by us (the Adepts) in every attempt we make to explain our metaphysics to the Western mind'.

“And well he may; for outside of metaphysics, no occult philosophy, no esotericism is possible. It is like trying to explain the aspirations and affections, love and hatred, the most private and sacred workings in the soul and mind of a living man, by an anatomical description of the thorax and brain of his dead body.”

Ernest Wood - Adyar Nov 1930

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## **PART 1**

### **LIFE AND ITS PURPOSE**

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#### **CHAPTER 1**

<b>THE GREATNESS OF LIFE</b>
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## THE USE OF REASON

ONCE upon a time it may have been that most people took it for granted that the earth was flat, and that the sun got up in the morning and went to bed at night very much like a human being. After a time, no doubt, thinking persons wondered why he did not get up in the place where he went to sleep, and then some of them said that the obvious thing was that he must have crept through a tunnel under the earth. Some more advanced theorists propounded the idea that perhaps a new sun was born every morning and died every evening!

How simple and obvious to those ignorant people, the majority, who assumed without thought that things are what they seem! And what difficulty those few people who *were* open-minded must have had, to make the idea that the earth is a spinning ball a living reality in their own minds ! They would have had to [Page 16] use reason to convince themselves, and then imagination to familiarize themselves with the fact presented by reason.

An ounce of accurate or scrupulously honest observation and a pound of reasoning were the ingredients necessary for the attainment of this item of true knowledge.

This preamble is not unnecessary. Things are still not what they seem. Common opinion, resulting from a pound of careless observation and scarcely an ounce of reasoning declares that life is little and the world is great, that we are tiny specks or sparks of life in the midst of a vast material existence.

By this guileless assumption every discussion as to the nature and destiny of man, as to the relation between mind and matter, as to whether men and animals and plants have or have not souls, and as to a hundred other questions, is poisoned at the beginning.

When we opened our eyes to this material light each one of us found himself surrounded by a vast variety of things. As we grew up we imbibed the theory that all these things

were made out of some substance called matter - just as a house is made with brick, cement, or other materials. And so people say that there is a material world. [Page 17]

## **FORMS ARE NOT MATTER**

But whatever this material may be, it is not the world we know. It cannot be seen, heard, tasted, smelt, or felt. What we do hear, see, feel, taste, or smell are *forms*, what some of the ancients used to call appearances or phenomena. It is necessary to distinguish between matter and forms, and to realize that matter has no sensible qualities or properties.

This is no mere academic discussion, for although we may not know the origin and nature of matter, we do know the origin of forms. Let us consider in this connection the environment of the average modern human being, the many objects which are modifying his character all the time. It consists mainly of man-made things — houses and furniture, clothing and prepared foods, streets and automobiles, books and musical instruments, and a thousand other things which have less relation to the matter in which they are formed than a brick house has to the clay taken out of the brickfield. Even the human body is a gradually produced instrument of mind.

Of course, not all forms are man-made. Some are animal-made, some are plant-made, and we are justified in saying, in the light of [Page 18] the latest knowledge, some are made by mineral life.

The forms with which we are surrounded are not material. They represent, on the contrary, a little of the life, because people make forms according to what they themselves are. As a bad carpenter makes a bad table and a good carpenter a good table, so are all these man-made objects portraits of the life that made them. The world of forms in which we are living is really a world of life. Every man has made the whole of his life or world, through direct action or in relation or combination with others.

So, in all this world, the life is everything. What have we to do with matter ? We have to do with forms, and we know these forms. They belong to the life that is living everywhere, not to any matter of which we have any conception. We are in a world

consisting solely of expressions of life. See then, the importance of life. The life is everything and everywhere; the matter is nothing or at least no thing. Understanding this, we shall not make the mistake of thinking of life as an abstraction, which could be only part of reality — *that*, without *this*. Life contains more, not less than what we see. [Page 19]

## **INCARNATION IS LIMITATION**

Life in this world — what is usually called incarnation or embodiment — is essentially a mind-process, in which concentration and meditation alternate, like the contraction and expansion of a heart, Imagine yourself coming to a great city and wishing to understand its life. You could not do so all at once. You would first concentrate, or narrow the field of your attention. You might say: “Let me see first the post-office, then the shops, then the hospital” — and so on. You would limit yourself to one part of it at a time, within the measure of your present capacity. When you had fixed your attention upon one such object, and thus marked out the boundaries of your present activity, you would proceed to “meditate” upon it, by which I mean to say that you would observe it carefully and give your full flow of thought to the understanding of everything within that boundary drawn by your act of concentration.

That is what we are doing when we “incarnate”. It is a kind of active or practical meditation. There are always three steps in a complete act of meditation — first concentration then meditation, which goes on until we [Page 20] have known the thing concentrated upon as fully as we can with our present ability, and then contemplation of that full thing. It is the meditation that gives knowledge, which is power, and contemplation causes us to reject the object and take away the power for use elsewhere, like the bee that takes the honey from a flower.

All our life is thus meditation. We are seeing our own thoughts. But it is a very real meditation, in which thoughts become things, in contact with which our capacity constantly increases.

## **THE UNITY OF LIFE**

There is a character of unity about all this collection of mind-made things, so that it presents apparent order and system, but that is because there is a fundamental unity of the life. Just as the five fingertips, if moved into different positions on a sheet of paper, will always make groups of little circular marks which have some constant relation to one another, because they are rooted in one hand and are energized from that source, so the collection of mind-made things presents a coherent world because there is *one life*. The [Page 21] world is one world, and its parts are not flying about disconnectedly, simply because the lives which are the makers of its forms are parts of one life. Human beings acknowledge that unity when they take the thoughts and feelings and the happiness of others into consideration. All the objects or forms or things which are evident to sense are expressions of the life, and the more its unity is recognized the more harmony will be observed among those expressions.

Now consider the expressions of life of any one man. He has great capacity. He can do many things. At any given time he may be digging in; the garden, playing the piano, writing a letter, or doing any one of, shall we say, a thousand things which are within his power. He is then expressing only a thousandth part of himself. When he is digging one cannot tell by looking at that expression that he is also able to play the piano.

If any one being thus makes forms which show only a small part of himself, and this is true of all beings, it follows that the entire world, which is only a collection of such temporary expressions is a very much smaller thing than the world of the life which gives rise to it.[Page 22]

Therefore it is the life which is the big thing and the world which is the small thing, and the world is in the life, not the life in the world. As Shri Krishna says in the *Gita*: “All beings are rooted in me, not I in them.” So the popular conception that the world is a big place in which tiny specks or sparks of life are moving about is contrary to fact, just as the appearance of the earth as flat is not the truth.

And as to relative reality. If the world of expressed forms has such vivid reality, and it is only in a sense a dream world, a temporary mind-creation, what must be the quality of reality in the world of life, whence alone these lesser realities are derived ? [Page 23]

## CHAPTER 2



## THE VALUE OF EXPERIENCE

### THE PURPOSE OF INCARNATION

IN the fact that all forms are in the life we see the reply to the question why a man should dig in a garden, or write a letter, or play the piano, if he belongs to the world of full life. It is because he wants to awaken himself to a full recognition of it all. In the same way, if we play a simple melody there is a succession of notes. But suppose each note died away from our consciousness (as it mostly dies out of the air and the ear) before the next was sounded, there would be no music. The melody is in the life, not in the world. Similarly, in a book there are many words, sentences, and pages. We read one page after another to get the clear idea; but that meaning is in the mind, not in the book. If we have it fully and clearly in mind, we do not need the book any more; it would only be a boredom to read it again. [Page 24]

As there is no evolution in a piece of music, but the whole of it reveals itself, so that to him who has musical capacity, or “an ear for music”, there is no superfluous note, so for the life in each one of us the whole will ultimately reveal its music, its integrity. The past will not then be something that we have outgrown and left behind, but will still play its necessary part in the music. One reads that a great composer heard a grand oratorio in one moment, and then laboriously worked it out into a material composition, He had the capacity.

So there is no *material* evolution, [ I prefer the word “evolution” to “progress”, because it more clearly implies the unfoldment of our own powers, like a bud opening into flower, while “progress” suggests a movement forward towards something which is not already in seed within us] but only the unfolding of capacity, as a bud opens into flower. And that puts an end to the question why a “monad” should “leave the perfection of the one life and come down to this world, only to return at last whence he came”. There *is* evolution, but it is not a sequence. The monad by its own concentration makes its time limitation. The time is of the material world; it is made with the form and shares its impermanence. [Page 25]

I remember to have heard an interesting story about a painter, which happens to illustrate the purpose of all experience. When he was still young he went one day to a woodland

with his teacher, and when asked what he would paint indicated a certain tree. “But”, said the elder, “you have painted that tree twenty times already; are you not tired of it?”. “No”, said the young man, “I have not got it right yet!’ When he did “get it right” he would not want to paint it any more. What it could teach him he would have absorbed, and he would now become interested in something else, which would be interesting because it would awaken some part of his life which had not yet awakened. What a bore when a person persists in repeating to us the same joke or story or experience; however good it may have seemed when we first heard it!

Thus we are all painters living in the gallery of the paintings we have already done, but which we have not yet set entirely aside, because we have not yet “got them right”, and obtained the internal satisfaction which comes from the feeling of unfoldment or expansion of some part of our life.[Page 26]

## **EXPERIENCE IS EXPERIMENT**

Once more we see that the life is everything, because the forms are all *experimental*. There is no world of material form, having a system, a plan, an order of its own, which stands there in its own strength, awaiting us, to teach us lessons from the outside. We are not explorers in a foreign land. All these forms, with their qualities or properties, are the expressions of our life within the delimitation of our acts of concentration. In other words, all experience is experimental. We have made these things, and we are looking at them and seeing what they are like.

We are discovering their unsatisfactoriness, their inadequacy, their *inequality to the intent of our being*.

The rich clearness of reality with which they stand before us makes us eager to have that rich clearness of reality in the full extent of the life which we have not yet expressed to ourselves in full strength and clearness. It is all experiment — like that of a man who has made a motor-car and now tries it out on the road, and finds many ways in which it is incomplete and unsatisfactory, It rattles, it smokes, it runs crooked, it is too slow. Such [Page 27] are the things that we are constantly saying to ourselves. The wise man, learning through experience, does not separate himself from the world, but says to himself; “I rattle, I smoke, I run crooked, I am too slow”.

## **PAINTER AND PICTURE**

This is the essential meaning of what in India has so long been called *karma*. Many people all over the world say that they believe in *karma*. They mean that a man cannot reap as he has not sown, that nothing can happen to any one of us of pleasure or of pain except as he has caused it to happen to himself by his own actions in the past, distant or immediate.

In connection with this there is often too much thought about the pleasure and the pain, and about what is sometimes called the opportunity and the lack of opportunity which these things give. The fact is that at every moment there is the very fullness of opportunity, because we have made our own environment.

The painter painted a picture yesterday. Is not that picture, whatever it may be, his opportunity for today ? Will he not look at it this morning and see some of its imperfections, which are his own imperfections that he would [Page 28] never have felt or seen if he had not painted that picture yesterday ? And now, when he tries again, setting aside those imperfections, will he not paint a better picture today, because he has had before him his work of yesterday ? He must be a better painter at the end of a piece of work than he was at the beginning of it, because his powers have grown in the process. So the picture helps him to develop his capacity and to enlarge or improve his vision at the same time [ All the world is eager to do creative work. As opportunities of education, leisure and freedom from set forms in every department of life increase, the life so freed burgeons delightedly into creative activity of innumerable kinds. There are thousands of students and inventors where there were tens, and probably thousands also of good writers, singers, speakers, painters, etc, where there were tens. This does not reduce the audience or the market, as might at first appear, because capacity to receive is increasing at the same time. But in any case an audience of one is sufficient for the unselfish man. Not only man shows this inner law — no two horses, no two flowers, no two atoms are alike, as they would be if they were stamped from the die of another's thought.] “The dead king may next see the light in a cooly’s tent” - by his own doing. But that will be his opportunity for experience that he needs, not a punishment, nor a delay.[Page 29]

## **OUR WORLD OUR WORK**

Our world is our work; it is nothing else. It calls us to new self-expression, which is greater realization of ourselves. It is not more than we are, but less. This is a world of life engaged in building forms, not a world of forms which become vehicles of life. You cannot put life inside a form as you can put water in a cup. Water rests in the cup because it is of the same nature as the cup. But the relation between the life and the form is that the life handles the form as a gardener handles a spade. While he is handling the spade he cannot very well write a letter with a pen. He concentrates upon one thing at a time, but in each case it is the life that is everything. The garden does not compel him to dig; the letter does not compel him to write.

Because life is everything, and even the forms are life (though they are only a bit of the life) he who would travel swiftly along the road of life must understand that *living* is the traveling of that road. This means that you do what you can with what you have — that you do not wait for anything, that you do not imagine that you need opportunity, or that any *karmas* can stand in your way. The literal [Page 30] meaning of the word *karma* is work, and it is to be taken in the way in which a carpenter would use it if he said; “This table is my work; this chair is my work”. These objects which we call our environment, our world, are our work. This world is the world of *karmas*, of things that persist while the life is interested in them. It is also the world of *maya*, which means not directly illusion, but creation. The illusion comes in when this world is mistaken for the world of basic reality, and is not taken for what it really is — a temporary creation.

There can be no injustice in a world of such forms. There cannot be the dreadful injustice of stark retribution, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But there is the marvellous justice that we live in our own world, and so learn. If, for example, I have been cruel in the past, that expresses my character, with such completeness as it has, and also with such incompleteness — in this case with some completeness of power but great incompleteness of love. And now I meet with cruelty. It is my own cruelty facing myself and it shows me the unsatisfactoriness of a life of cruelty. It helps to awaken my understanding and sympathy. [Page 31]

## **THE BENEFIT OF EXPERIENCE**

There is immeasurable benefit to be drawn from our experiences, whatever they may be. A good example of this truth was given to me many years ago by an old *paradeshi* of South India. This gentleman was blind and also penniless. Sometimes he lived in a very primitive cottage, which had been put up for him by some friendly villagers, and where a very old woman would cook a little food for him, but more often he wandered from

village to village over a considerable area. This man was by no means ignorant or unintelligent, but could converse lucidly on a great variety of subjects. He was also a master of certain psychic powers, and showed me again and again that when he chose to do so he could see what was happening at a distance, although he was totally blind.

He told me one day that in addition to his “clairvoyant” powers he had the capacity to look back in memory into past lives, and thereby he explained to me the cause of his blindness and poverty. It was due, he said, to the fact that when he had been living some eight hundred years before as a rich man, in the neighbourhood of Delhi, he had been cruel and vindictive. His present troubles were the outcome [Page 32] come of that, but he did not regret them in the least, because in the course of his helpless wanderings he had made many kind friends, and he said that the human affection which he now gave and received contained happiness such as he had not known before and would never have known had he continued in his old condition of wealth and power. But of course he would not have the same experience again, because with his newly developed character, along the line of love, he could not himself perform the old cruelties any more, even though he might again become a rich man.

So this world is worthy of all *respect*, because our experience is peculiarly appropriate to our development of character, having been formed for ourselves by ourselves, and also because it displays to us the nature of reality, which is not vague or abstract, but concrete. As a lamp which casts only a dim light all around, on all the objects in a room, could vividly illuminate one object in that room, if it were surrounded by suitable reflectors, so is our consciousness made aware of the full quality of its own reality by the concentrative process of form-making, which is called *karma* and reincarnation.

But we are living lamps. What is achieved [Page 33] is not lost. The notes of life that, we sound one after another have perpetuity in our being. We are gaining the power to grasp the whole music, the full song of life. And when that music is heard, fully and clearly, we shall no longer want to play the separate notes, to limit ourselves to the temporary forms. We shall have finished our schooling, and shall live in the world of life, which is nothing but the being of life itself, knowing its own full reality. [Page34]

### CHAPTER 3

## THE GREAT ACTIVE PRINCIPLE

## LIVING FORMS DEFINED

IT is impossible to define life. But then it is also impossible to define “green”. We can only refer to our experience. Only the living can know life, and even then only as living, for it cannot resemble any static or dynamic form.

By life I mean what we all mean when we say, “I am alive”. This cannot be taken *a priori* as the function of the brain. That would be to assume the natural development of a function performing no useful act, but churning out in materially fruitless varieties many forms of the idea “I am alive”. The useful function of the brain is to move the body. If it can thus perform all that is required for bodily adjustment and adaptation to circumstances, why should it bring in consciousness as an unnatural and useless by-product ? Or if this mechanism has two [Page 35] simultaneous functions, one useful, the other merely conscious, why should not the flame of a burning candle be also conscious, as well as a giver of light and heat ?

We are coming to know life better and better as we experience the consequences of its activities in relation to objects. All these objects are resistances or obstacles; for example, objects seen are obstacles to our vision, and the earth resists the rotary movement of our leg-system. When there is no resistance we move unconsciously; in this manner we are traveling with the earth round the sun at the rate of eighteen and a half miles per second, and at the same time whirling round with it at anything up to a thousand miles an hour. Were objects not resistances our life would be nothing but a futile dream, for we should merely create a shadow-world according to our whims, containing nothing but our fleeting pleasure.

We know something about life in activity in relation to these forms or resistances. It has six distinguishable activities, in three-pairs. The first three are *will* (purpose), *love* (interest) and *thought* (method or planning). These are expressive, form-building in their effects. In thought, for example, we have [Page 36] action, for what we do with our hands we do with our thought, since our thought moves our hands. The second three are receptive forms of knowledge, mind-building in their effects. They are *knowledge of self* (the essence of all will), *knowledge of life* (the source of love) and *knowledge of objects*.

Forms are of two kinds — those which are made from outside, and those made from inside. A tree grows and takes its form from the power in the seed. Not all the earth, water, air, sunshine and gardeners' care in the world can produce it. That form is made from within. It is a living form. All human and animal bodies are also of this kind. A house, a motorcar, a cloud-castle — these are non-living forms, because made from the outside. The nonliving forms, are, again, of two classes, as being produced either intentionally or casually, like, for instance, (1) a chair and (2) an ant-hill, a heap of stones, a cloud-form, or a dead body.

Many attempts have been made to distinguish between living and non-living objects or forms. Probably the best is that which declares that every living being shows the instinct of self-preservation. This is no doubt true as far as it goes, but self-preservation implies something more — namely, the enjoyment of life, [Page 37] and the instinct of self-expansion, the desire for *more* life.

This fact is seen very clearly in human life, where those are accounted the best who show most the tendency and the capacity to increase human interests and knowledge and power. There is no one who does not strive for more enjoyment of life in some form. We do not wait for an external stimulus to awaken us, but with thought and will and through affectionate relationships we constantly aim at increased life.

It has been thought that among inferior creatures we might find one which awakens or comes to life only when acted upon by an external stimulus, but this missing link between the positive living being and the passive nonliving form has not been discovered. On the contrary, among the more elementary forms of life we often see intelligence and adaptiveness which might put many men to shame.

## **THE POSITIVITY OF LIFE**

As an example of the positivity of life, let us consider for a moment the amoeba. For the benefit of those who have not yet had occasion to learn anything about the amoeba, [Page 38] I may briefly state that it is one of the very simplest of the protozoa, or unicellular living beings, and when at rest is a tiny globular mass living in sea or pond water, or in the blood or body fluid of higher animals. It changes shape so as to engulf or ingest any

nutrient matter which may come in its vicinity, digests what it can of this, and then ejects or egests the waste matter. Because these operations are all performed without special organs, it has been taken as an example of the principle that “function precedes organ” in the evolution of living forms.

If such function were awakened and exercised always in the same way, or if the presence of nutrient matter always produced the same effect in the amoeba, it might be argued that the life was aroused by some obscure chemical properties of its mass. But this is not so, as was well shown in the case of the relations between two of these small creatures observed by a distinguished scientist.

It happened that these two — one very small, the other larger — came near together. The larger apparently thought: “Here is nutrient matter”, and immediately went towards the smaller. Now, on exactly the same grounds one would have expected the [Page 39] smaller to run towards the larger, for who ever heard of a mouse being afraid of a piece of cheese because it was twice as big as himself ? However, the small amoeba, instead of responding to the call of nutrient matter, represented by the larger one, simply fled for its life, with the larger in hot pursuit. It was captured, struggled, and escaped, was captured again, and finally engulfed.

As a result of such observations, many and varied, Mr. Jennings, perhaps the greatest authority in this field, wrote: “If *amoeba* were a large animal, so as to come within everyday experience of human beings, its behaviour would at once call forth the attribution to it of states of pleasure and pain, of hunger, desire and the like, on precisely the same basis as we attribute these things to a dog.” [*Behaviour of the Lower Organisms* by Jennings.]

The fact is that as a dog jumps with delight at the prospect of being taken for a walk, with all the varied experience and movement, or increase of life, involved in that, so the amoeba is not merely a responsive chemical mass, but a positive living being, full of adaptiveness. It comes within Professor McDougall's description: “The activity of an animal is aroused by a stimulus, is directed towards an end, and [Page 40] does not cease until either the end has been attained or the animal is exhausted. If the end cannot be gained by one means, the animal will attempt to gain it by another.”



I will give two more examples, out of the thousands possible — one from my own experience, the other from Fabre the great observer of insect life. In my travels I had picked up in Barbados a large piece of white “brain coral”, so called because its external form resembles the shape and convolutions of the human brain. In it some other creatures had bored several deep cylindrical holes about the thickness of a thin lead pencil. I took this with me to Adyar, on the other side of the world, where such things do not grow, and it remains on my desk as a paper-weight.

One day, while I was writing, a wasp came, inspected the coral, selected one of the cylindrical holes, proceeded to prepare it for its young by lining it with brown clay and tiny bits of leaves, and finally put in some eggs and some paralyzed caterpillars, and stopped up the entrance with the same kind of brown clay. After all this was done she went away for a time, but at length returned with some white substance of a limy character, with which she painted over the brown clay entrance, making [Page 41] it exactly the same color as the rest of the coral. And finally she engraved on that white surface corrugations similar to those of the coral! It was a striking case of adaptiveness.

My second example, taken from Fabre, shows that though the more lowly creatures, like men, are willing to follow an example or a leader, and so save themselves some trouble of adaptation, the time comes when they are thrown back upon themselves, and then individual initiative appears. The scientist was observing a procession of caterpillars of a certain kind (which I have also frequently watched in Australia) which follow one another head to tail. He induced the front one to proceed along the rim of a large palm vase. Round and round they went until thoroughly tired out, when they went to sleep, still in formation. The next day, and indeed for seven days, they resumed their fruitless journey, no doubt getting hungrier and hungrier. Now and then some of them straggled a little, showing their dissatisfaction, but returned to the fold, until on the eighth day they broke their ranks, and very soon each one had separately found its way to the nest.[Page 42]

## **ENVIRONMENT AND MIND**

Now a question arises: “Does environmental selection produce this capacity for adaptation, and the mind that goes with it ?” Modern evidence shows that certainly that is not the case. But first let me describe environmental or “natural” selection, so that the reader who has not yet carefully informed himself on the point may have its meaning clearly in view.

In a family or herd of zebras or antelope, some will be born with less capacity for speed or for endurance than others. As lions, which chase these herds, always take the weakest or the slowest, the others, which are superior in those qualities, survive and tend to propagate their kind. So the qualities of speed and endurance are “selected” and “preserved” by the environment (that is, the lions), and they tend to “develop” or increase because the unfavorable varieties are destroyed, if the same process goes on, on account of the continuance of similar experience or environment.

Another example that I may take is the gannet, a sea bird which lives on fish. By flying at a height of fifty or sixty feet above the water, it can see into the depths and observe [Page 43] the fish, which it then catches by the simple process of dropping like a stone into the water. Thus it differs from the sea-gull, which scoops its fish from the surface. Now, the gannet cannot see the fish in a storm. Therefore in stormy weather it must fly away to a calmer region, sometimes many miles distant. In this case, the weaker die on the way.

Thus natural selection operates to specialize some natural instinct to strive to enjoy or increase life, which natural selection could never implant. No environment will affect a being that is not interested. Further, the intelligent adaptations are very often transmitted from generation to generation, and qualities or characteristics thus have origin in the intelligence, not in the environment.

Such transmission was in doubt for some years (following Weismann's theory that acquired characters are not inherited) but has now been proved beyond question. For example, Prof. Pavlov's experiments with white mice showed that they handed on the capacity to understand. He fed some of these animals daily, after ringing a bell. After three hundred times, they realized a connection between the bell and the food. He bred them together, and the next generation learned the same lesson in [Page 44] one hundred trials. The third generation learned it in thirty lessons, and the fourth required only five. Thus life does, through its own efforts, mould the forms it inhabits.

In further proof of this instinct of self-expansion or capacity to strive, there are many cases of the possession of qualities which could not be developed by natural selection. For example, there is a blister-beetle that lays its eggs near the burrows of certain mining-bees, and then dies. The little one comes out of the ground, finds its way onto a flower, and from there hops to a bee's back, where it lives until the bee has provided her cell with honey and pollen. But as soon as the bee has laid her eggs there, this little creature jumps off her back onto one of them, and later eats it and grows into a blister-beetle. That one leap from the bee to the egg is not a character that could be gradually encouraged by the

slow process of natural selection. Some enterprising blister-beetle must have invented the idea and passed it on to her descendants.

## **THE POWER OF LITTLE LIVES**

Not only is the life in all beings a positive form-building cause, but it is immensely powerful [Page 45] Consider a little seed planted in the ground. How small, this, that may grow into a mighty tree! We know that the material of the tree is taken from the air, and water, and a little from the ground, and that the sunshine has played its part in making possible that growth; but it is the life in the seed which has taken hold of the materials and forces outside itself, and built them up into that splendid and powerful form. Even the detailed form of the leaf of an oak tree is determined from within that seed. It sets up the unknown machinery which can lift great volumes of water to the top of a tall tree.

It is of great significance that such an eminent biologist as Sir Arthur Keith has recently emphasized the fact that the embryo does not merely run over the history of the race to which it belongs, as is usually supposed. The new idea is that the embryo reproduces only those characters which are needed as scaffolding for the new form, and that there are apparently purposeful modifications in preparation for variations in form even at that early stage. [“There is a recapitulation of ancestral history as the human embryo passes through its ripening stages, but this recapitulation is masked by the display of characters which are wholly of recent origin. Nor need this surprise us. What should we think of a builder who in the erection of a palace insisted on ‘recapitulating’ all the evolutionary stages which lie between a hut and a palace? In the development of the human body, as of that of every other living thing, we find a strict observance of the principle of economy. If an ancient feature is reproduced, it is because it is a necessary part of the scaffolding for the new.” *Concerning Man’s Origin*, by Professor Sir Arthur Keith, page 21] [Page 46]

There is one general principle to be remembered in connection with all these forms. We are viewing time-realities. The static moment is an unknown thing, an imaginary figment of erroneous thought. Everything is dynamic, kinetic; its properties are teleological. The cause and effect which are implied in the qualities or properties with which one form acts upon another simply show that they are all matters of mind, that mind is the great active principle which whirls the torch that looks like a ring of fire, which finds melody in a succession of notes which do not themselves combine to form that melody, since each dies away before most of the others are born, or is born after they are dead.

Round us are life and the evidences of life. Matter has no form. [Page 47]

## CHAPTER 4

### THE HUMAN LIFE CYCLE

#### STAGES OF LIFE

I HAVE already explained that all living is essentially of the nature of meditation, which consists of three stages — concentration, meditation and contemplation. This *psychological* process reflects itself into the world of forms and produces *cyclic changes* — wheels within wheels — in individual and collective life. Thus we have first childhood, in which there is much searching about among the forms, so that presently among them a selection may be made for the life's activity; then there is manhood or womanhood, with its special work in each individual case, and thirdly there is ripe age, with its tendency to contemplate the experience already garnered and to let the forms go. The child has finished with his particular toys. He has filled himself to present capacity with feelings and thoughts about them. [Page 48]

#### POSTHUMOUS LIFE

Tradition and occult research both lend support to the theory that after the death of the body the life cycle continues in quite a natural and rational way. The after-death life is almost always described as the immediate outcome of the feelings and thoughts stored in the mind. As the Vana Parva of the *Mahâbhârata* puts it: “This is the world of actions, and that is the world of their effects. In ' heaven' the results of actions already done are enjoyed, and these must be carried out completely, but no other actions can be performed.”

Among Christians also the same idea obtains, that purgatory and heaven result from the desires and thoughts of a man, which must be dealt with in those conditions. Even death-bed repentance, if absolutely honest, is held to produce new conditions, in accordance

with the character which the man now has, The two successive parts of the after-death life consist firstly in getting rid of the unintelligent attachment to the forms no longer needed, and secondly in confirming and perfecting the good qualities of character which have already been partially developed. [Page 49]

So the form or world is a temporary self-created obstruction, by means of which the wandering mind is arrested and caused to pay attention to what it would otherwise avoid. At death that is removed. No longer will things from outside *force* themselves upon our attention. We can now follow out our own immediate thoughts, go where we please, do what we please, have what we please.

These traditions and observations are very rational. They suggest a natural sequence, because we came into the world to learn, and we leave it without having completed that work. We have gathered much material for thought, but when we die we have still to do most of our thinking. That may well take place in the relatively subjective planes of the subtle bodies, where thoughts are things and each man furnishes and peoples his own "heaven".

I will discuss this subject in Chapter 13. Here I want only to show how *natural* and logical such a state would be, completing the cyclic method of a life. Afterwards, the impulse of feeling and idea being exhausted, the subjective period comes to an end, and the life cycle begins again with a new incarnation, with reference to other experience which the man still needs, varieties of experience incompatible [Page 50] with the former, and a removal of old prejudices and fears.

## **CYCLES EVERYWHERE**

The same cyclic law will be seen in the case of nations. These groups of people take to themselves certain group ideas, which cast a color over all the activities of the group, but when the idea has been lived by those who need it the race weakens and dies away. It applies also to animal, vegetable and mineral forms, to atoms, globes and systems. Everywhere is the same cyclic change, *produced by the same psychological cause*.

The apparent system of races, etc., is due to the fact that the monads evolve in a certain way, not that this scheme is fixed for them by someone else. It the "Third Logos" planned the worlds in which we live, we planned them. The Logos is not other than the

collectivity of monads, which is the unity of monads.[As indicated in *The Secret Doctrine*, Stanza i 4, “Universal mind was not, for there were no *Ah-hi* to contain it.] So there is no Being working upon us externally, that is, through forms which he has made and we have not made. A scheme made for [Page 51] us by somebody else would destroy our freedom (and thus negate the fundamental postulate of theosophy as to the positivity of life) as effectually as would interference with our wills, if that were possible.

## **THE CAUSE OF DEATH**

So in the course of a lifetime (or rather a body time) a man makes and uses his forms, as though a pianist should make his piano, play upon it, wear it out and cast it aside. It is only a matter of time before even that which is called death will be seen to have a psychological cause. Even now no scientist can tell us what is the cause of death or when comes the moment of death. That is because the moment of death is decided not physiologically but psychologically, by the man or by the life, which can leave the body when it determines, at various stages of its decrepitude. Animals die easily, but men die with difficulty, or reluctantly, because they have more purpose.

Once I was sitting with a friend who had been lying abed at death's door for many days, suffering from an incurable disease. There was present a man who was somewhat clairvoyant or thought himself to be so. He said [Page 52] that he could see our sick friend standing outside his body, looking at it very dolefully. Our friend had been greatly unwilling to die. There was some eager desire of his which was unfulfilled, and though it was quite clear to the rest of us that that body was so far broken that even if it got better he would never be able to do with it what he wanted to do, he was still hanging on to it in suffering and sorrow.

Then I said: “Let us reason with him. Let us advise him to break the link from his side and let the body go.” The advice was given to the man standing outside his body. He accepted it, and within two or three minutes the body was dead. And then the man who was, or thought he was, clairvoyant saw an amused smile come over the face of the man who was “dead”, as he said; “Listen here, Wood, and I'll tell you something. Death is nothing, just nothing at all”.

This passing away of forms will not trouble those who understand the fundamentally of life. On the contrary, it will be seen that death has its uses. The form ought to be

temporary. A poet may use pencil and paper to help himself to form his poem, but when it is finished he has it by heart and can throw his writing [Page 53] away. A musical composer forms a piece of music in his mind, and then clarifies and perfects it by playing it to himself on the piano. The form is a means to aid the concentration of his mind on the part of his life which that music represents. A painter painted a picture yesterday. Today he looks at it studiously and sees its imperfections, that is, its inadequacy to the fulfilment of his life. So today he tries again. The goal of life is never in the form, but only in the full awakening of life itself.

## THE MAKING OF FUTURE LIVES

I have spoken of the past and the present — now the future. We see that it is the creative attitude that marks out our life, and when that is clearly seen our purpose in life becomes rational. We are interested in the unfoldment of our powers, the development of our capacity, through the exercise of our thought, love and will.

It is only such efforts that make for progress. Obviously, then, the road is long in proportion to our failure to make such efforts. I am not proposing that anyone should live in a state of strain. There is a certain wise [Page 54] degree of effort which each of us can find if he measures his own strength. The question is; “Are we quietly turning our attention to the goal of life and to the meaning of experience in the light of that goal, or are we instead passing our time, or even our “spare time”, in the indulgence of idle, sensual, or selfish thought ? It must be one or the other. There is no question of strain, but there is a question as to which way our faces are turned.

Let us suppose that a waking week consists of a hundred hours. Are we spending ninety nine hours each week in idleness, selfishness or carelessness, and only one hour with our faces turned towards the goal ? If that is so, is it not obvious that we are *making future time* for ourselves, that we are carrying forward to another week those ninety nine ill-spent hours ?

Let me put this in terms of reincarnation. Some of my friends have an idea that many people require about seven hundred and seventy seven lives in which to complete their human evolution, from start to finish. This implies that *if* they had not on the average spent seven hundred and seventy six out of every seven hundred and seventy seven minutes of the day in non-essentials, that is, with their [Page 55] faces not turned towards

the goal, but had made full use of every minute, they would have completed the task in one life! Most people have probably already had many more than seven hundred and seventy seven lives, and still they go on learning with ninety nine per cent, of experience and one per cent, of thought, instead of one per cent, of experience and ninety nine per cent, of thought. What is required is more wisdom, and less trial and error. Ultimately each one must reach the goal in one life.

Time ill-spent is time created for the future, for the living which might be done now is simply being put off into the future. In such ways men are making a long, long road for themselves, and dooming themselves to wander in comparative misery for many incarnations. Our future incarnations are not a necessity, but they mark our failure.] Reincarnation is the perfect opposite of the hell-fire theory. Many who hold that view state that we deserve to be punished for not taking the opportunity put before us by Christ! The Orientals are kinder, because the hells they propose are temporary, and are very literal punishments for particular sins, as when the lascivious man is doomed to embrace a red-hot statue of a woman, or a dealer in meat is pecked by crows with iron beaks. But reincarnation is a kind theory, for it announces that men will have their opportunity again and again, until at last they take it.] There [Page 56] is, however, no need to worry about waste of time, for we can make all that we want. One should go on living, without thinking about time or death. There will come a time when we shall live one life without turning our faces away from the goal. It will be a very perfect life on earth. Though it may deal with vary little things, as the world counts littleness, in those things we shall never be shaken from understanding, love and purpose, all of which spring from the vision of the goal.

## **NO MATERIAL EVOLUTION**

Evolution is traveling the road to the goal of life. It is the unfoldment of the powers of the life. There is no material evolution. If it appears to be so, that is only because the life is producing in some particulars a better form today than it produced yesterday. If we were to keep a gallery of the pictures painted by an artist, all arranged in chronological order, we should see quite clearly that number one had not evolved into number two, or number two into number three. There is an evolution of the pictures, but only because there is an evolution of the painter.

There is not even material causality [Page 57] among the forms. They are merely objects in space, defined by their dimensions in space, and they have no power to step out of the



space in which they are. The changes that occur in time are brought about by a superior reality, which is the power of the life expressing itself in these forms.

There is then only one royal road to the fullness of life. It is the natural road of positive living. Men are busy making it long, because they are afraid of life. We are familiar with the simile of a broad road winding round a mountain and rising spirally to the top, and the idea that on this the millions toil, while but a few take a steep path which goes straight up the mountain side. But the straight path is the natural path. The winding path is the unnatural, for men make messes of their lives, just as they make messes of their food. We have man-made health, which is disease, man-made clothing, which is ugly, uncomfortable and unhygienic, man-made religion, which separates us from the good or God. This is so because men are afraid to trust themselves to the wings of life, and cling too closely to the forms by the wayside. But this is not in itself their natural life, which could be simple, true, beautiful, and strong. [Page 58]

## CHAPTER 5

### THE FUNCTION OF DESIRE

#### INSATIABLE MAN

DESIRE is the manifestation in consciousness of the instinct of self-expansion. In man it knows no limits. All men want to be God, that is to say, they want to have omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. How often have I wished that I could be in two places at once, and if that desire were granted I should want to be in a hundred! It may appear for some little time that a man is contented with smaller things, such as a home and happy wife and children. But that is only a smooth harbor following a troubled voyage, and very soon dissatisfaction (I do not like the word discontent) will raise its head, and he will yearn — not for storms, as some believers in the “old Adam” seem to think, but for something a little nearer to omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. And ever and anon new fuel is added to the fire of his dissatisfaction [Page 59] whenever he thinks of power or knowledge or ubiquity greater than his own.

Consider this and you will see that *desire* is expression in feeling of the instinct of self-expansion, and is therefore the mainspring of our evolution. Necessity may be the mother of invention, but desire is the mother of our necessities. The world, would make no

impression on a man who had no desire to seek pleasures or to avoid pains. Therefore desire is something to be cherished, to be encouraged, but at the same time to be studied and understood. It is the opposite of sleep, and its degree marks the presence of life.

Study the effects of desire in your own character and environment, and you will find that it is constantly introducing us to new experience.

All human desires, good and bad, have the same essential nature and always refer to the man himself. He may say “I want to possess money, jewels, friends”, but he means “I want to *be* rich and popular”. Many men feel themselves expanded by the addition of these things. Others live for the sake of sensations — to heighten these is to increase their sense of being. Others seek learning and knowledge — for the same reason. And others [Page 60] again work for the welfare of mankind. In the last case it is in no way derogatory to the man or his work that he cannot leave himself out. It is surely an additional merit that he takes pleasure in doing good.

Fundamentally, all desires are good. They lead to the experience which the man specifically needs, and from which he will obtain a part of his evolution. And because a man *always* acts according to his strongest desire, he obtains first the experience which he needs most.

All experiences bring in a painful element, as soon as the limitation is felt. As long as there is the feeling of expansion — in body, emotions or thought — there is pleasure, but when that piece of expansion is gained the limitation is felt, and then there is pain. Whenever the instinct of expansion is thwarted there is pain. Life has made pain, along with the body. There is no need to chafe against it, for it is always a warning friend, without which we should be dead within a week. When there is pain we know that there is something wrong with us. What a mistake to live to avoid pains and for pleasure, when all pleasures, if taken over and over again, find their end in pain! Better the joy of life, like a bird on the wing. [Page 61]

## **INTELLIGENT DESIRE**

But learning through desire and experience may be less or more intelligent. The more intelligence there is, the less is the need for repetition of experience. This is the chief value of thought, or rather “meditation”, which needs no ritual of posture and prescription, but is best done in immediate association or alternation with actual experience. I may look at my watch a thousand times and not know the form of its numerals, but if I think about it I shall soon know, The world is drenched with beauty and meaning which few people see, for lack of meditation, or concentrated thought,

Therefore some evolve quickly and others slowly, according as their desire is intelligent or unintelligent.

In addition to intelligence there must be the will. The will is the whole of the self turning its attention to a part of itself. It is a superior knowledge — not about things, but about what things concern us at any given time. It operates to unfold or evolve that part or quality of our being which is still asleep, and so determines our interest, when that is not spoiled from the outside by fear or pride [Page 62]

We have our individual predilections — marking our desires. In college one student takes to geology, another to mathematics, another to zoology and natural history, and a fourth to history and philosophy. I knew one man who for no visible reason took a great interest in human beings and minerals. In college he took to geology, mathematics, physics and chemistry, with philosophy as a hobby by the way, and had decidedly less interest in animals, and still less in plant life.

A man cannot do everything. Indeed, he ought not to wish to do so, since the world is mainly a collection of other people's experiments. What have I to do with a knowledge of all the streets in Philadelphia ? That is somebody else's business. I must find my own.

It is possible for a man to learn to feel quickly within himself for the root of his immediate desires. Putting his trust in that quiet inward admonition (and not permitting pride and fear to sway him about) he soon finds the greatest possible guide in his outward life — which is the intuition of the will. [For a full discussion of this subject, see my *Intuition of the Will.*]

Intelligence is spoiled by fear, and the will [Page 63] by pride. On account of fear and pride, people do not live fully, but entrench themselves like soldiers hiding from the enemy's fire. The man of fear does not face the adventure of life, when he lets fear affect his desires. Fear should be a purely mental thing with us, an intelligent watchfulness. On account of pride a man goes on displaying what he has already gained, and carries it on far beyond what is necessary for the learning of the lesson of experience, He thus prevents the ground from being cleared by intelligence for the operation of the will, so that it may make that self-change which is necessary for starting a new section of experience. Pride should be only in the will, the dignity of life true to itself. That is why worldly greatness sometimes shows that a man has kept at one job too long. It is artificial and unnecessary, like the biceps of a professional athlete, or immense learning, which are not required for the reaching of our goal. Our greatness lies not here; the mouse is as wonderful as the elephant, the grass as the tree.

It ought not to be too much trouble to dwell in moments of leisure upon the meaning and use of desire. I know that many people will say "It is difficult, and our stupid minds [Page 64] see nothing". But go on trying, and not caring whether you succeed or not, and within a week you will see the nature of your desire and whither it is tending. And you will see also that knowledge of this fact is the first step on a swifter road of evolution, that with this knowledge you can save yourself from wandering miserably in the old paths, from carrying the dark part of your past into what ought to be a brighter future. It makes the difference between rowing a boat and putting up a sail.

## **LONG AND SHORT VISION**

Desire awakens thought, which is its handmaiden. It is therefore of two kinds, according as it is with or without vision. Thus there are desires for the goal and desires by the wayside. And desires by the wayside are of two kinds — attractions and aversions. For example, a man lives in a country place, and he wants to go quickly to a distant city in his car, because that city holds for him the fulfilment of his desire. As he proceeds on his journey there will be two kinds of desires in his mind — desire for the city, to have all that it holds for him, to be all that it can stimulate him into being, but at the same time he wants to avoid [Page 65] as much as possible the deep ruts, the potholes and the thorns with which the road is strewn.

From his desires-to-avoid are born by revulsion temporary forms of contentment, which are the desires by the wayside. He will say (1) "Let me enjoy some sensations, that life may pass tolerably", or (2) "Let me have possessions, so that I may feel some power", or

(3) “Let me have the entertainment and support of friends, for there is gaiety, if nothing else.” But nobody *really* wants these things, that is, nobody wants them *for ever*.

None of the objects of the wayside are attractive as compared with what the goal has to offer. But many of them appear so to a man harassed by the roughness of the way. So, after much complaining about the rough condition of the road, the traveler will often settle for a while in the peaceful harbor of a wayside hostelry, and say, “There is pleasure here”. “I will be satisfied with this.”

But that satisfaction is only apparent, not real. It is born of his desire-to-avoid. The man still wants the city, but he does not want it more than he fears the road. All pleasure by-the-way is therefore short-lived. As soon as it has been fully tasted, its incapacity to [Page 66] satisfy is known. It is inevitably compared with the vision of the goal, so, though fear and pride may cause serious delay, there is always some progress on the road of life.

Our dissatisfaction is a precious thing. It is caused by our vision of the goal, however dim that may be. Therefore it is a first point of wisdom to be content to be dissatisfied. The vision of the goal gives happiness that runs along with the dissatisfaction, and entirely changes the taste of it.

Even the best of the desires by the wayside is an aversion. All personal desires, for the excitement or the comfort of sensation, mild or strong, or for possessions and friends, are only refuges. They are sought out and clung to through fear of the open road, as Hamlet preferred the ills he had to others that he knew not of but feared.

## **HUMAN STALACTITES AND STALAGMITES**

I see then two kinds of people about me — those who have the vision of the goal and those who have not. Or rather, as this is a relative matter, those who have a great vision of the goal and those who have so little that they do not know that they have any at all. [Page 67] All these people look to me like the contents of a great limestone cave hollowed out by carbonized water — there are many stalactites hanging from the ceiling, and many stalagmites standing upon the floor. Some people have their broad base above, others their broad base below. Of those who perceive only the things by the wayside the desires

become attached to those things, and their divine energy (for there is no other energy) builds a kind of stalagmite, which, however, cannot help but rise upwards even from that base.

Thousands of people try to get to heaven keeping their feet on the earth. But the man who is stalactitic is he who is broad-based in his vision of the goal, and puts down from above his finger of consciousness, concentrated, purposeful, vigorous, clear-sighted, to deal with this thing or that thing in the light of his vision of the goal. He has to do with many things, but they are all linked together by his one purpose. Think, for example, of an artist, who is filled with the desire to paint a beautiful picture — many things have something to do with that one purpose. He rests at night — in order to paint that picture. He gets up in the morning — in order to paint that picture. He washes, dresses, eats his breakfast [Page 68] , buys pencils and colors and canvas, and goes to the forest — all in order to paint that picture.

Such a man does not depend for his interest on external stimulus or excitement. He has purpose. But the man who has no desire to understand, but only curiosity (which is desire for sensation), who has no desire for the largeness of life that shows itself by love, who has no purpose, has no concentration. All his divine energy has dripped onto the floor. [Page 69]

## CHAPTER 6

### THE GOAL OF LIFE

#### THE FULFILMENT OF DESIRE

IT is sometimes thought that desire is a prolific and misleading impulse, which requires to be checked and severely pruned by intelligence. On the contrary, desire provides motive, while thought studies ways and means. But there is such a thing as intelligent desire, which means not desire *restrained* by intellect, but desire educated through experience accompanied by thought.

There is nothing to replace desire. It will alter with experience, but it should *never* be diminished, for that would mean slowing up our evolution, of which it is the mainspring. Less desire, less living.

Desire points to the goal of life. Since men want to become “God”, and nothing less than that can ultimately satisfy them, it means that there is an element of divine vision in desire, so that man can never be entirely [Page 70] untrue to himself or to the purpose of his existence. He will become God. It is the height of intelligence to see that goal, and to learn the passing nature of mere forms. So when the goal is seen intelligently desire has its greatest power and most direct purpose.

## **THE GOAL NOT FAR AWAY**

Do not say at the outset; “This goal is too remote for me. This vision is too fantastic. It is concerned with the whole universe, and I am only a very tiny part.” But consult your deepest desire. Ask yourself what you want. Do you want that goal or do you not want it ? If you do want it, you will have it, though it is universal. It is only ignorance that keeps you from it, and experience with thought will remove that. Do not let false humility keep you back from your birthright. You are a king of creation, not a scavenger living on the leavings of others.

Do you not see that there is a false distinction between the small and the great, the part and the whole, the finite and the infinite ? For the small things of life are marvellously united with the great whole of life, as the sun may shine into every drop of water.[Page 71]

If you examine some small object and study it carefully, with concentrated attention and full thought, giving your time to it ungrudgingly, you will come to understand it, and soon understanding will be easy. Or if you do the same thing with regard to a person you will come to love him, and love will become easy. Or, if you similarly devote yourself to some work of art, you will become skilled to draw a straight line with your unguided hand, for nothing else develops the will like art.

You may think, “Yes, these are the little things with which we have to fill our lives; far removed from the goal of full freedom or power, and full love and understanding, which you call omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence”. What a mistake! By understanding one little thing you gain the power to understand other things; by learning

to love one person you gain the power to love other people; by acquiring one accomplishment you develop the will with which you can achieve other things.

## THE BODY A LIMITATION

Truly the body is a small thing, but it is concerned with great things. What is the use [Page 72] of the body? I find that even people who consider the body to be not themselves nevertheless believe that it enables them to do things, and that they walk about and see the world *with the aid* of this body, that it is a *vehicle*. But I have seen for many years that on the contrary it is a *limiting* instrument. I see with my eyes the contents of a room, and that vision is limited by the surrounding walls. Suppose that suddenly my power of sight went through the walls, and extended itself into every hall and room and street in a big city. The sight would be too much for me. I should stagger with the immensity and the complexity of it all.

Thanks, then, for the *limitations* of the body, which assist me to focus my attention upon a scene within the measure of my capacity, my individual experiment, instead of leaving me wide open to the world, with all the indefiniteness of that state. I cannot pay full attention to many things at once or in a short time, but I can bring the full power of my will, my affection and my thought to bear upon something small enough for the capacity of my powers of consciousness. Then that capacity grows. The will that has learned to hold its own in one thing will hold it in many [Page 73] things; the love which has won a triumph of unity between two persons will win the unity of many persons, and the understanding which has grasped the small things will grasp great things.

At last the will, the love and the understanding will no longer need the limitation provided by this body, but the life of which they are the conscious powers will stand in its own strength open to the world, to live its own great world-life, in which freedom, unity and understanding blend in one glorious state of conscious being — or I think I must call it super conscious being, since the consciousness that we commonly know is the broken consciousness connected with the sequence of little things.

Do not, then, tell me that our goal is a distant thing. My life has the character of the whole even while it is directed to the part. Many people have a dim vision, which may be called an intuition, of this fact. I knew a lady who used to travel for months and sometimes even for years from her home, and when she came back she always said: “I



have a curious feeling that I have been here all the time; I cannot realize that I have been away". I told her that I was quite sure that she had not been [Page 74] entirely away. The same lady when at a distance would sometimes receive a letter from home, and then say: "I have that curious feeling again; I cannot realize that all the people there are going on with their usual activities without me". The same answer applied, of course.

## PERCEPTION OF THE GOAL

So do not be shy of your vision of the goal. But watch your perception of it, and take care that the casual perception of things by the wayside does not cause you to forget your vision of the goal. This is important, because on the road of life this perception all the time governs the desires, which are the energy of life. As desires are of two kinds — to achieve and to avoid, so perception is of two kinds — the casual perception of the things by the wayside, and the reaching out perception which knows something about the city to which you want to come. The vision of the city whose minarets and domes you can see in the distance determines the direction of your steering, but more than that, and at the same time, it reflects itself into the present, so that the ruts and pot-holes in the road cannot trouble you as [Page 75] they do those whose vision of the city is almost lost.

Picture yourself as an adept life, not an adept form, for forms are only organs, and the function or power of the life produces the organs. The adept life is the constant seer of purpose and beauty, the constant feeler of love and unity, the constant understander of the use of things to the permanent life. Too often "adepts" are thought of as external forms, as though one should see a beautiful spade digging in a garden and be strangely blind to the existence of the gardener handling that spade. Picture yourself as life without internal obstruction or external discontent. Remember that your attainment is a *certainty*. What then does it matter what the road to that goal may be; that which is certain is almost as good as that which even now exists.

There is no other power to be compared with this perception of the goal. It can fill the present with the fullest life of which we are now capable. *Every moment lived and every action done in the light of that goal, is the most profitable moment, the most successful action possible for us.* This is a fact that applies to all men, tall or short, young or old. It is the great awakener. It brings the [Page 76] fullness of all our life to a focus upon the part of it with which we are at the moment engaged. It vitalizes desire, which is the energy of life. It is the vision of God [The use of this word is a concession to popular language. We must not think of a ruler or master of the world. A source — yes, but that is the life, which is also our life. I prefer the term "the divine", because it is connected with the

Sanskrit *div*, which means “to shine”. The divine is that which shines with its own power — not light alone, but *any* power, not by reflected light or derived power.] and our union with God. This is theosophy, which has rightly been called “an intimate knowledge of divine things”, and “a direct knowledge of God”. The light of the goal gives new significance to everything upon the way, and can in fact transform every trouble into a delight.

## **OUR SUBCONSCIOUS POWER**

The power of this perception (once we have had it clearly in our minds) is present not only when we are thinking of the goal. By degrees — and sometimes in a flash — it fills all the chambers of the subconscious as well as the conscious mind, like the sunlight which is shining directly outside, but also diffuses [Page 77] itself through even a small window into every corner of a room. In our delight in the direct sunshine, let us not forget that it works its magic also in those dark rooms.

Then the perception of the goal will exert its power at all times, whether we are thinking of it or not. The forms which surround us are immensely susceptible to its influence, as they are also even to lesser perceptions. For example, it has frequently been observed that adopted children grow to resemble their foster parents; thinking of them has produced this effect. Even the humble flatfish adds its small quota of testimony to this truth. Lying in the shallow water over the brown sand it becomes brown, over the grey sand it becomes grey. But if that flatfish happens to be blind these changes do not occur.

I believe I see the same effect in communities and nations — that it is some way of thinking common to the group, and the constant perception of one another, which bring about a similarity among them, counteracting considerably all the influences of heredity. Many artists are aware that their work is nation-building work, inasmuch as it excites the perception and the conscious or unconscious desire of the people who see it. One striking [Page 78] case was presented by the well-known American artist, Mr. Clarence Underwood, originator of the “school-girl complexion” pictures, who wrote with regard to his own little daughter.

“Many years ago I suddenly stopped painting the blonde woman who had dominated my work, and began to draw a girl. People asked me who she was, and I truly could not tell

them. She was certainly not the model that I was using, nor any combination of several models. She was herself, and to me at least an ideal type.

“My little daughter Valerie was then six years old and she loved that dark girl intensely. She would come into the studio and stand behind my chair and watch me paint, until discovered and dragged protestingly away. For years I drew that one face with little variation.

“When Valerie was a young lady, some fifteen years later, she was the living image of that pictured face, which I had drawn so many years ago. I know that her love and admiration for those pictures were responsible for it.

“Old friends of mine when they met my daughter would exclaim at the resemblance, although at the time I painted the picture Valerie was nothing but a baby, with no more [Page 79] semblance to the face on the canvas than I myself had. Her actual looks were changed to conform with a pictured face which she loved, and 'this same result may happen to any girl. The American girl of today is more nearly the result of the artist's ideal than she herself can possibly know.”

I believe also that many of the outside occurrences, opportunities and cataclysms of life are much moved by our perceptions and by our vision of the goal, as well as are our condition of health, strength and beauty of body and mind. There are subtle affinities, and what we seek also seeks us. [For example, the quotation from *The Secret Doctrine* which I have given in the preface to this book was hit upon in the following way. About a week after I had thought out this book and dictated it to a secretary, and while my thoughts were much upon this view-point, which to my mind is the essential and the only real theosophy, I was traveling on a ferry boat, carrying with me a copy of *The Secret Doctrine*. It occurred to me that it would be interesting to open it casually and read whatever turned up, I did so, and came straight upon this passage, in which I was glad to find that Madame Blavatsky entirely endorses the outlook which I have made my own. Many people would regard this as mere chance. I do not believe that. Our lives are full of incidents engineered through, various laws worked by our subconscious minds.] [Page 80]

**THE GOAL IS HERE**

We may, call the goal of life whatever we like. The Chinese have been very wise in their nomenclature, having the same word for both God and heaven. The goal is not an objective region, nor is it a subjective state. It is the fullness of life. It is like a picture containing all colors. We are looking at that picture in the world, but in a color-blind way.

If we look at a picture of many colors and are able to see only, let us say, the red strokes upon the canvas, it will seem chaotic, but when we come to see the other colors it is at once all order and meaning, a thing of unity — therefore of beauty, truth and love, for these are only unity itself, expressed respectively in form, in thought and in feeling. All our experience has meaning. There is only one life and only one world, and these two are only one. There is nothing to leave, nothing to lose, but everything to gain. There is no monotony in unity, like the monotony of a row of pins, or the monotony of a shoreless and uninhabited ocean. Uniformity is separateness, but unity implies infinite diversity. The nirvanic plane is here. What we see is a part of that. [Page 81]

What must we do about it ? As I wrote in [Concentration](#) twenty years ago [1910]

“If you have said 'I will', then choose what you will have, and the nearer your choice is to the heart of the Great Law the sooner you will succeed. Give reign to your fancy and picture to yourself the liberty, and the might, and the love, and the knowledge that will be yours, Your chariot shall be the lightning flash, and your raiment the splendor of the sun, and your voice shall be the thunder of the spheres. The divinest knowledge shall be your food, and the ethereal blue your home. Yours shall be the strength of mountains, the power of the tempest, the force of the ocean, the beauty of the sunrise, the triumph of the noonday sun, the liberty of the wind, the gentleness of the flowers, the peace of the evening twilight, the purity of eternal snow.

“First of all believe in your own immortality, then realize that the future is full of splendor without limit, of achievement beyond and beyond, and beyond again, the most avaricious dreams of imagination, and that that achievement is a matter for your choosing now. Death is but a trifling episode in our age-long life. Through its portal we go as one rises from a bed of sickness to go out into the [Page 82] sunshine. If we set our hearts upon the superhuman things, then we shall achieve. If we fix our ambitions in human life, these, also, we shall attain in constant rebirth. Believe in your own immortality: give wings to your imagination, say; 'This is within my reach; I will achieve,' and success will come sooner than you expect”. [Page 83]

## CHAPTER 7

### THE WAY TO THE GOAL

#### LIVING is LIFE

THE road to the goal of life is — living. Living is creative work, since we make all our own experience, through our experiments. Such work may be mental, emotional, or physically material. This does not mean that a man must be creative or original in everything, but that there must be some point of personality where he rises out of the mass — where his own desire is original and his life is felt. In those matters in which we follow custom we are not living or evolving. That is like the wooden part of a tree, in which no sap is flowing, but it must be there as a thing used by the tree as a means of reaching up to the light, and at the same time living in the moisture brought up from the ground. Such parts of our own body and mind as have become merely reflex or spontaneous in their responses are of the same nature, but we *live* at the point of [Page 84] our individuality, where our original powers appear.

Some people accept established customs — in dress, manners, business and even religious forms, because this leaves them leisure to think, and saves them from the exhaustion of planning new ways and the conflict of going against the stream of ordinary life. Others accept traditional ways of thinking, merely because this makes smooth the path of social intercourse and self-expression in the corner of society to which they happen to belong, and opens for themselves the door to the enjoyment of the many pleasures which it contains. But as thinking is for living and living is for undertaking — not mere sensation, except on the surface — both these lack the character and benefit of creative work or real living. Such people go on for their whole life-time making mistakes — the theorists or spectators losing the corrective of experimental experience and the butterflies losing the corrective of interested thought.

But thought and action combine in creative living, and between these two the emotions become pure and sweet. Creative living awakens more and more — the ego, the “I am”, so that each moment is full of life and growth, [Page 85] The creative liver may be a statesman, philanthropist, philosopher, interpreter, scientist, devotee, or artist, with an

audience of one or many, with canvas as small as his own skin or as large as the world, but whatever may be his *métier* he really lives, while the imitators, the copyists, the conformists, are relatively dead all the time — they tread the paths of animal, vegetable or mineral life, not that of man. It is better to be a man painting on a small canvas than a human fungus covering the world.

The objects or forms which surround us on that road are objects to be lived with. Just as an architect might find himself in a remote South Sea Island, where he would busy himself building beautiful and useful houses with the materials from the palm trees and grasses within his reach, or might find himself in a modern city, with steel girders and electric riveting machines, and cement and iron and glass to his hand, and there he would build another kind of house, so each man finds himself among objects with which he can live. The objects do not constitute the life. The living constitutes the life, for life is dynamic. Perhaps it would be better if we talked about “my living” instead of “my life”, for living is life. Life cannot stand still.[Page 86]

## NATURE HELPS

Nothing thwarts our creative life; on the contrary, there is a double conspiracy to promote it. There is life's hunger for its own fullness, which we have already considered, and then there is the world's law of destruction or perishing. Not that the world really destroys. It is the life that has made everything that has been made, and when the life is withdrawn from that which has been made in order to give its attention to something else, that object begins to decay. [ For example, certain fishes, having transferred themselves to dark underground waters, gradually lost their eyes. There was no external cause for this, for darkness does not positively act upon the eyes to remove or diminish them. Nor are eyes a disqualification for life in the dark. But life was not entering them, with its energy, which is desire, so they gradually faded away.] For life is concerned not only with creation, but also with preservation of the forms. And what we call destruction is a still deeper law of the life, by which it stimulates itself to new efforts, to greater and more successful expression of its powers in the building of forms.

If a man builds a house, that is the result of his thought and energy. Life has built the house. But when the work is complete and he [Page 87] ceases building, the house begins to decay. Therefore, even before he has a vision of the goal and understands the value of full living, and while he is still attached to the objects by the wayside for their own sake, or for what he thinks to be the permanent enjoyment of those things, he is still being caused to employ and exercise the powers of his life and therefore to develop them. He himself

evolves in the process, for though his houses perish one after another, he remains, a better, wiser, stronger man. So, at last, dying is a part of living, in which there is destruction of forms as well as preservation and creation.

## COMPENSATION

Nearly a hundred years ago a well known American thinker, who was certainly a theosophist in the general and proper meaning of that term, wrote an essay, which is still widely read, entitled “Compensation”, in which he pointed out that what is gained in one way is usually lost in another, and what is lost in one way is usually gained in another. As told in the old story, the peacock has beauty for the eye, but the nightingale has beauty for the ear. Of late, we have been reading of medical men [Page 88] who have been curing rheumatism by inoculating their patients with malaria, and vice versa. The following old Oriental verse apposite:

When I sent you my melons you cried out with scorn,

“They ought to be heavy and wrinkled and yellow.”

When I offer'd myself, whom those graces adorn,

You flouted, and call'd me an ugly old fellow.

The whole principle of compensation lies in the fact that one instrument is good for one thing and another for another, and it is not possible to have all powers at once, and yet be the limited creature that we know as man. The Hindus have depicted their divinities with four arms or six faces in their attempts to conceive the whole in the part, but do what we will in this world of parts, we can have nothing that is whole — except the whole.

This is seen in action as well as in form, A man with his versatile brain and hands may hold a spade, a pen, the steering wheel of a motor-car or a hundred other things, but he cannot use them all at once. He may choose which he will, and be free in that choice — but his power is never equal to his freedom, and [Page 89] therefore the appearance of activity of a man can never show the full reality of his being. It is the custom of vulgar minds to judge others with extreme superficiality, and therefore to see their faults or incapacities, without realizing the tremendous reserves which thus exist in every human character.

The same principle appears again in the unfoldment of character from childhood to old age. From beginning to end the process is one of loss as well as gain. We have not at twenty-one the sweet simplicity and single-mindedness of early childhood, nor at forty-two the uncalculating emotions of twenty-one; and at sixty-three we have not that confidence in the stark logic of the mind which was ours at forty-two. Yet all these states are admirable. We have great cause also to admire animals and plants. Taking the special qualities of each, they are splendid subjects for hero-worship and emulation.

## AWAKENINGS

Here appears the weak spot in the theory of evolution as it is popularly conceived, as a process of *accumulation* towards perfection. Some think that we go on adding to our [Page 90] capacities or removing our defects (according to the “builder” theory and the “sculptor” theory) through a series of incarnations, until we have accumulated to perfection. But in this way no perfection is ever reached on the road of life. Every perfection is an “initiation”, a beginning of something new, within the life of him who attains it. If a student understands the significance of a point in science or history it means an awakening in his mind, and it is the beginning of life lived at a higher level or more richly than before.

The circumstances of a day or a lifetime are never equal to the man, because he limits himself in attending to those circumstances, as a gardener limits himself when he is handling a spade. Roughly speaking, up to the age of about twenty-one we are giving the physical nature its turn, from then to forty-two we are giving the emotional nature its fling, and from then till sixty-three it is the mental which sits in the seat of the mighty. For example, “calf love” is a thing of physical sensations, [The other day a visitor had called at the house of a friend, and had nursed the young son of the house on his knee. After he was gone, the little boy said, “Mother, I like that man.” ‘O’ replied the mother, “why?” The child knew exactly why, and stated his reason without hesitation — “Because he has hairs in his nose!”] entirely self-centered. The youth [Page 91] would like to display miracles of courage — for his own gratification. But the love of the grown man for wife and children is pure and heroic emotion, with a sensibility that penetrates into the world of life of those other beings and finds in them a set of divine wonders and glories, a vision of other and different parts of life itself.] In a “soda fountain” in New York, I overheard one young man say to another, with great emphasis and bitterness; “If it wasn’t for the wife and kiddies I wouldn’t stick it”. This is common enough. Few wives know what their husbands endure, and vice versa, and mercifully, the children do not know at all.] Only all beings can express the whole of life. Every one of us would like to be everything at once, but we have to be content with the next best thing, which is love, the



recognition in others of other parts of the all-embracing divine life, which have not been vouchsafed to us.

In the third stage, after the age of forty-two, if there is love it has lost some of its bravery, has an eye on the cupboard, and is largely a comfortable agreement. If there is then a conflict between love and reason, the latter wins. If the divine fire is not caught [Page 92] in its proper stage, not in this life will it be known to us in its simplicity and power. The opportunity has gone, for life is a thing of phases, since the hands which go round the clock do not carry the numbers with them on their journey.

## **THE SCHOOL OF LIFE**

Why should there be this loss and gain? Because we are not yet truly born to life. The life that we know from day to day consists of fragments. We have not our full life, but are learning to live, and all the objects of the world which are taken up and put down one after another are like the toys of a little child. Something is gained through them that never was in them, for they are but a means for concentrating our attention upon each lesson in turn, as a child develops the mother impulse with the aid of a rag doll.

We are at school, in preparation for life, and as a child at school is immured in one classroom after another, in order to learn, let us say, history, mathematics and music in turn, so we find ourselves greatly limited by one condition after another. And as the child will be soonest done with the mere learning of [Page 93] history, mathematics and music who gives full attention to those subjects each in its proper turn, and does not let his mind rove to the others, so it is the greatest wisdom in practical life to fight the battles and learn the lessons that are before us — not to wait for circumstances to change and other opportunities to present themselves. Whatever the occasion is, take your opportunity. If you have eyes, look; if you are blind, feel and hear. It was an observant man who advised us never to do *unwillingly* what is our necessity. [Understanding leads to interest and broad desires. The trouble generally is that our desires for certain things cause dislike of other things. Mr. Lilliput likes carrots and lets it be known. He then complains of the monotony of his table, but when cabbage or cauliflower is served he grumbles because he does not like them. Or he likes one kind of weather. Happier the man who can look out of the window in the morning, and say; “Ha, sunshine today. Splendid!” or “Ho, nice rain this morning. Fine!” or “Fog! What a long time it seems since we had a slice of real fog!” or if the house is washed away or burned down, “We are to have a change. Good!” At the same time, I am not suggesting that he should be offensively cheerful in his manner on these occasions.]

Because we are learning one lesson at a time we are not engaged in displaying what we have so far gained, but in gaining what we have not. Therefore we cannot judge ourselves [Page 94] or others by the appearances of the moment. The child may be excellent at music, but that will not be apparent during the history lesson. Every one of us is engaged in showing the worst side of himself to the world, not the best, since we are here to deal with those things which develop our deficient points.

This principle displays itself all along the road of life. A man may be very near his goal; still he is here to reveal to himself some part of what remains of his own incapacity, and by struggle to convert that weakness into strength. This is a good reason why no man can be leader to another. All such leading is the blind leading the blind. Every man has his own problem, and also the key to his problem. If this knowledge disarms uncritical hero-worship it also destroys purblind criticism.

## **NEARING THE END**

This knowledge is immensely encouraging, No man knows when he will break through the prison-wall and come out into the open air of free full life. He is painfully conscious of the obstruction and of the weakness of his own arms. Let him dig away at the walls; suddenly his pick will go through the last thin section [Page 95] as though it were an eggshell, and he will find himself free. Achievement is sudden. One day the schooling is finished. The child walks out into the great world armed cap-à-pie with all the capacities which it has laboriously acquired one by one. This is the end of schooling, full “initiation”, the beginning of life.

People have invented various heavens for themselves, but they have mostly been afraid to launch themselves upon the ocean of free life, even in imagination. They would have a land flowing with milk and honey. When the missionaries went among the Eskimos, and wanted to translate this point in their teaching into understandable terms, they had to speak and write of a land flowing with blubber. Some want golf; some want music; some want rest. Some say we are souls on probation, being tried to see if we are fit to be kept. Some say we are souls in evolution, accumulating experience and capacity. But I would say we are developing our capacities one after another in preparation for the beginning of full unlimited life.

There is no possibility of missing this end, for all efforts lead towards it. What is not discovered by thought is learned by experience [Page 96] or, in other words, mistakes. So all is learnt, sooner or later, and in the deeper sense there are no mistakes. Theosophy is “knowledge of God”, which means the divine here and now. In all his affairs every man is “alone with God”. Beauty must meet beauty, love love, and thought thought, in those conversations.

How is it that most righteous persons are not beautiful ? Because they have not thought of beauty, or if they have, they have not thought beautifully, but have sought it with the ugliness of care. They persist in dealing with men and things, and not with God, here and now. Others restlessly seek rest, but peace will never be attained by rest — only by life, like an eagle swiftly moving on the wing. There is rest in the power which needs and asks no rest. The world is not destroyed for us when we attain our goal. It becomes vastly more, but the pain of time is gone. [Page 97]

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **BONDAGE AND FREEDOM**

#### **WHAT DO YOU WANT?**

I have already explained that there is no material evolution, but there is the evolution of the powers of life in every one of us. I have explained also that the unfoldment of these powers is usually retarded — that men make for themselves a long road of life, spread out into a long future the attainments which could be gained in a short present. There is thus no penalty for not taking opportunities. They are offered even unto seventy times seven. The evolution of the individual depends entirely upon his answer to the question: “What do you want ?” Commonly, people do not examine their desires, but they go on desiring all the same. In this case the desires may be great, but the use of intelligence is small, and therefore theirs is a long path in life, confused and almost purposeless.[Page 96]

#### **THE FOUR ANSWERS**

There are only four answers to the question which each should put to himself — what do you want ? (1) Some want sensations; (2) some want possessions; (3) some want friends; and (4) some few want capacity for a fuller life. We need not study the detailed psychology of these four classes of people — and there are no others — but it is well that we should observe what they are, for if our knowledge is something to be used it will be

our object to leave the first three classes immediately and so take, quite instantaneously, a great step forward in evolution.

(1) Among the people who live for sensation are those who occupy their minds with impure and exciting thoughts in their leisure hours. They think about food and drink and sex appetites and relationships. If there is conversation, some of them delight in gossip, in the excitement of news and the even greater excitement of being purveyors of news. If there is reading, they must have sensational newspapers, sloppy love stories or dreadful detective tales. If there is traveling, they must rush about in motor-cars at an unreasonable speed. If there is staying at home, there [Page 99] must be enormous beds and kitchens and wallowing in luxury. Or, at least, there must be comfort and peace.

(2) Those who live for possessions desire wealth or fame in some degree. I knew one vigorous old gentleman who, at the age of eighty-two, while conversing with some of his sons, aged between fifty and sixty, suddenly burst forth with the remark: "You boys don't seem to know what is really worth while in life — it is to watch your bank balance, and see it increasing every day." People of this type spare themselves no labors and shrink from no dangers in order to accumulate the possessions they desire. This gentleman died worth about a hundred thousand pounds, and even then he could not bear to break up his fortune, but left it mainly to one son. It must have cost him many a pang to leave even a small proportion each to the rest of his children.

There is the same phantasmal value in the pursuit of fame; its votaries never stop to reflect that nobody knows them anyhow, just as in connection with possessions there is usually very little real possession. And these desires appear in small and unsuccessful lives as well as in the bigger and more successful. We must have a house, and it must be furnished [Page 100] like those of our neighbors, and if possible a little better.

(3) The third group consists of people who desire family or friends. There must be someone to entertain them in one way or another, to support them in their beliefs, or before whom they may display their latest point of wisdom or accomplishment. It may be only one boon companion, or many friends.

These three classes or groups of people are not getting the most out of life, either in progress or in happiness. Analyze their private thoughts and feelings and you will find that the desires which they follow are not natural to them, but they have taken to them as

a refuge. They are the people who are whispering to themselves, however faintly; “There is no greatness in life for us, therefore let us eat, drink and be merry.” But they get precious little merriment out of it all. It is only a refuge, on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread, but it is not half of the loaf, nor even a hundredth part of it.

## CAPACITY

(4) The fourth class of people are those who care for the capacity to live, that is to [Page 101] say, for life itself. They value love and thought and will, and in the use of these powers they find happiness, with sufficient merriment on the side. I am not proposing that people should be interested only in what is going on in their own minds, in the development and exercise of character and power. It is not a material condition that we are considering, but it is life lived as such in the midst of things.

Shall I enumerate the objects of desire which appear in this class? First there is health, then strength, then beauty. These cannot be acquired like possessions, and they never come to him who lives for sensation, or who depends upon the entertainment and benefit of friends. It is by living to capacity that these things become ours — but let us not talk in the language of possessions, for these good things are not possessions but are the expression of our life. Let there be indolence, selfishness and carelessness, [ There are only three real vices — laziness, selfishness and carelessness — and laziness is easily the first and worst, for it includes both the others. When it goes, in an individual case, selfishness appears, when selfishness goes there is still carelessness. When that goes, the man begins to live as such and he soon enters our fourth division — those who live for capacity, or life. For a full exposition of the three fundamental vices, see my *Character Building*.] which are the [Page 102] absence of life, being the absence of will, love and thought, and see what becomes of health, strength and beauty.

Those who follow the fourth path, which is voluntary evolution or the unfoldment of life, soon discover the same fruit in the emotions and in the mind as in the body. Affection is the health of the emotions; interestedness is their strength; cheerfulness is their beauty. And of the mind, judging is the health, planning is the strength and understanding is the beauty. Let these qualities be sought, and all the material things will be added.

People tell me they are too feeble to live, that they must fall back on one or other of the three refuges. But I say their feebleness is only a habit, out of which they will come with

a little effort. They must think, or at least they must try to think. Go by yourself into a quiet room and shut your eyes, and try for a quarter of an hour to think of something — anything. Do it day after day. If you do not succeed immediately, you will do so in a week, or at any rate in a month, though such a length of time will rarely be necessary, for the life is waiting for its awakening, and it is eager to break through the shells of habit. A little thought goes a long way. We have only to [Page 103] dwell upon the life until we want the life, and when we want it the life will come, and we need not then linger year after year and life after life amidst the miserable products of unintelligent desire.

## **RELEASE OF THE MIND**

What I have now been talking about as the fourth path or the path of life is what we have sometimes called the probationary path. It is the release of the mind for the understanding of life. It begins with the perception that we live under laws of life, or spiritual laws, which are superior to and enclose the material laws of the worlds of forms, which are only limitations or partial expressions of life.

I think that theosophists of all times and countries have always divided mankind into these two classes — those who live for the delights of the body and those who live for the delights of life. It is really the difference between the materialists and the theosophists, considered, not as a matter of theory of life, but from that supreme test of belief which is desire expressed in practical life. In this classification, those who desire a bodily heaven, however [Page 104] attenuated or glorified, are materialists. But the desire to have capacity indicates that we are interested first of all in the life or living, and that the bodily things are secondary. It indicates that the affairs of life are now governed from within and not by circumstances, although they are the same affairs as before.

This understanding of life establishes a spiritual individuality in the body. I have already explained that individuality may or may not be selfish. It may go forward to many triumphs and still be centered in its own interests. But we cannot find our own life without soon finding the life in others, a discovery which starts us off on a new course and has therefore been called by many “initiation”. It is, of course, the beginning of a new life, in which the individuality is as strong as ever, but its interests reach out far beyond the limits of the body.

I am not suggesting that all the people who are interested in family or community or country or humanity, or in any movement connected with these, have therefore begun this new life. In most cases it is not so, for often they are mere careerists. They want to be pleased with themselves, and since they have been drilled in the idea that it is [Page 105] good and right and noble and advanced and so forth to have these wider activities, they often labor hard in them, but really they do so in order that they may be pleased with themselves, or so that they may not be displeased with themselves. There is much more genuine spiritual quality in the consideration for others which gives rise to natural courtesy than in many of these much larger efforts.

I must try to make this point clear, for our understanding of initiation depends upon it. Anyone who has been living for capacity for some time tends to develop what is commonly called genius, so that in a given incarnation there will be many things that he could easily do or many careers he could easily follow. [ Let me give an instance recorded by Lord Frederick Hamilton: "My youngest brother would, I think, have made a great name for himself as a cricketer, had not the fairies endowed him at his birth with a fatal facility for doing everything easily. As the result of this versatility, his ambitions were continually changing. He accordingly abandoned cricket for steeplechase riding, at which he distinguished himself until politics ousted steeplechase riding. After some years, politics gave place to golf and music, which were in their turn supplanted by photography. He then tried writing a few novels, and very successful some of them were, until it finally dawned on him that his real vocation in life was that of a historian." ] [Page 106]

## **RELEASE OF THE HEART**

So there arises the question; what shall we do with our lives, when so many different possibilities are open to us ? The answer comes naturally. We become interested in the larger life which is going on all round us. It becomes quite naturally *our* life. Individuality has gone beyond the boundary or skin of one body, and therefore a new life is begun. Love finds a motive, where reason failed.

Then the only thing that holds this new life back, from its perfection can be the impurities belonging to the old state. When Buddha spoke of these, he listed them as five fetters or obstacles. I need mention them only briefly, as they have been fully discussed in my little book, *The Intuition of the Will*. The first is selfishness, which we have already considered. The second is doubt or uncertainty. It is better to live according to a few things of which we are reasonably certain than according to many things as to most of

which we are uncertain. If we act on our certainties our lives will be strong, and soon they will become rich. The third is superstition, which is the permitting of external things to direct our emotions and thoughts. In the fourth and fifth [Page 107] place come liking and disliking. When there is affection, large interestedness, the incidents which formerly created a great many likes and dislikes begin to minister instead to the direct purposes of life itself.

## **RELEASE OF THE WILL**

We have frequently used the word “arhat” in theosophical literature, having adopted it from Buddhism. It means literally one who is able or competent — one who is really living, whose life is not obscured by circumstances. It thus has reference to the will. I am not forgetting that strictly speaking there are no circumstances, but only the expressions of our own imperfections, which stand around and jeer at us, so to speak. The arhat is an artist in life, so these forms do not trouble him.

He has also come to a further realization. The many lives around him are not interesting individually, any more than he is interesting to himself individually, but they constitute one picture, which he is beginning to see. There is a certain danger in talking about these things, because persons hearing about them may want to please themselves by being these things, and the difficulty is that such desire to [Page 108] be pleased with oneself stands in the way of the natural unfoldment of this reality.

The last difficulty or obstacle which the arhat has to overcome has been briefly described as the superstition of the ego. The common man thinks his body to be himself. The arhat still thinks his powers of consciousness to be himself. His individuality has grown until there is no life in which he is not interested. But what he fails to realize is that that which he calls his individuality is only the reflection of the whole in the part. The perfection of man is not an individual achievement of all perfections, but is the attainment of perfect harmony, or perfect relations with all others.

Achievement must not be thought of as ability to make vast quantities of the imperfect pictures which men are making for their own education, but must be considered in terms of life itself. It is liberation from the necessity, and at the same time from the desire, to concentrate in that manner, to make those forms which are so much less than the reality,



and are limitations of the life. No more would the liberated man think of making such forms than a great sculptor would play at producing statues without heads. [Page 109]

There is only one one. There is no integrity except in that whole. The dew-drop must slip into the shining sea. This simile should help us. The drop of water has two parts — its waterness and its dropness. Its waterness is its essential nature; its dropness is accidental and external. If individuality is thought of as the dropness there is an error. Well, then, when the dew-drop slips into the shining sea it is the same water that it was before. It is the same life. All the individuality or character that we ever show is but the reflection in part of that which alone has individuality — the whole.

It is a very profitable thing to dwell upon the idea of entering the world of life. In that there will be all variety but no limitations. In that we shall have returned to our own true nature in full strength and power, so that our will will be as wide as the world and the full aroma of reality will be over all. This is the liberated soul — not one who is full of power and desire to interfere with the world (which is nothing but a collection of temporary life-expressions), but one who has entered into life. Such liberation is not the end of life, It is only the beginning of our true life. [Page 110]

## CHAPTER 9

### PROGRESS AND PEOPLE

#### THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

LIVING in the world is a collective thing, but experience is individual. Therefore progress or evolution is individual. This paradox is, however, only superficial, because there is only one I in all of us.[This may sound dogmatic, but I would appeal to experience resulting from careful observation. If I am with a circle of friends, I may refer to the bodies (including my own) respectively as “It, and it, and it”. I speak to those friends as “You, and you, and you.” My own consciousness, with its collection of habitual ideas and feelings, is also a “you ”, for I can look at that exactly as I look at the “you” in others. Then there is no discernible difference in the I's, for there is only one

pure “ I ”, though it speaks through many “yous”. One life makes one world. Also, as the “ I” in me does not know itself as different at different ages of the body, so it should not think itself different in different persons.]

First let us observe that all the elements in this collective living have come through individuals, that each is making a contribution [Page 111] in his own sphere of influence. The results also are ultimately individual, because we cannot develop another man's capacity by the exercise of our faculties. Evolution is not merely the result of experience, which one man may put before another, but is deeper than that. A cat cannot learn from a king, nor a fool from a wise man. Experience does not give us evolution. It is the *use* of our powers — our thought, will and love — upon any experience which produces evolution. Our powers evolve themselves by exercise, or better still, by exertion.

Evolution is individual. In theological terms, God is fulfilling himself in each man — otherwise there would be no point in that man's existence. But it is not necessary to be theological in the matter, because we can see what is happening in any country. You cannot by process and act of parliament invent a dynamo or aeroplane, or discover the electron, or paint the most beautiful picture. Every original achievement — a little part or a big part of any discovery or invention, is due to the evolution of the powers of an individual, which in turn was due to his exertion of those powers.

That country is most progressive which [Page 112] gives most opportunity for individual freedom in the exercise of those powers, not that which drills its citizens like common soldiers, who, though well trained, are notoriously unintelligent. If today it can no longer be said with accuracy, as it could in former times, that the history of a nation may be written in the biography of a few individuals, that is because with the advancement of liberty our nations are seething with geniuses — there are too many to mention, so that we do not even know who is the inventor of many most useful articles, or who is the originator of most important elements in our social code. Can you say who invented or discovered matches, pins, rubber, the carburetor, the dynamo or artificial silk ?

## **WORK AND WORSHIP**

If we want further evidence that experience is not evolution, but that evolution is due to our living or our treatment of experience, let us consider the bluebottle. I do not know whether in the privacy of its own apartments it toils or spins, but when it spends its time

among my works of art and science it does not appear to profit particularly thereby. [Page 113] Similarly, when a party of tourists is taken to see the great dynamos at Niagara Falls, no doubt they are much impressed by the mighty power of those revolving drums, and the whirring, singing sound, but have they in their minds the thousandth fragment of the picture which would be in Edison's mind were he standing in that place ? Not if they stand there filled with the greatest awe and admiration for a thousand years will they advance one step nearer to it, but the humble student who uses his intelligence gradually comes to understand. Nor do I think, turning to another aspect of human activity, that great love can be approached or realized except through the study and practice of common goodwill. It is no cheap sentiment.

I knew a scientific man who was in charge of a large radio station, who was so impressed by a new valve which had come out that he told me he felt that he could go down on his knees and worship it. The other people there would have thought those valves to be only “funny bottles” if they had not been told that they were the means of sending out messages for many thousands of miles around. There was all the difference in the world between awe and what he called his worship, [Page 114] which was admiration due to understanding, which was full of joy, freedom and power. This is the enthusiastic religion which a thinker of last century called “the flowering and completion of human culture”, the temples of which God builds in the heart of man, on the ruins of creeds and of religions.

We have electric light. What we do with it alone determines our progress, not what it does. To one man it is a means to self-indulgence and dissipation. Next door a student, who has no leisure during the day, uses it with knowledge in view. Similarly, the presence, the light and the help of a teacher can also be used in both these ways. All light, all experience, belongs to environment, not to evolution, which is in individual hands. [Co-operation or organization consolidates our material gains. It does not create, and more often than not it stifles the genius who would carry the work beyond its standardized forms. The value of standardized labor in production is that it gives the worker both leisure and the opportunity to fill that leisure with the materials of self-education.]

In some parts of India where I sometimes live we still use a candle or an oil lamp. The moth makes one use of my candle, the lizard and the frog another, The moth flies into the flame. The frog and the lizard run and jump [Page 115] around and eat the remains. The question is — do we want light, or sight? Which is it ? The light of life is everywhere; it is the power of sight that we need to seek.

The same principle applies in the region of our emotions and our thoughts. We do not need to explain away our difficulties, but we want to understand them so as to have the power to dissolve them. If I am indignant when I see injustice done, a theosophical friend who has missed the point of theosophy takes hold of my waistcoat button and “reasons” with me. He says, “But do not you see that there is no injustice. This person is only suffering on account of his own misdeeds in the past. And no one can suffer without such cause. So be calm, for everything is all right. If the suffering is your own, suffer in silence, and be comforted with the thought that the clouds must roll by and a better day will come.”

This is superstition, the perversion or misapplication of a truth. *Karma* is what we have made. The carpenter has made a table. Now let him use it or exchange it for something else. And if he does not like it, let him alter it. This is the truth and the value of *karma*, There are emotional and mental dissipations and idle luxuriousness as well as [Page 116] physical. Religions are saturated with such consolations, which create fools' paradises which last for a long time, and discourage self-confidence and the exercise of individual powers. [Page 117]

## CHAPTER 10

<b>BROTHERS</b>	<b>AND</b>
<b>FRIENDS</b>	

### THREE KINDS OF BROTHERHOOD

AN old proverb says that the worst is the perversion of the best. Man can be more cruel than the tiger. A motor accident or an airplane crash is worse than the tumble of a running man. Therefore a superstition, which is perversion, is most dangerous, and the greater the truth connected with it the more carefully must its application be studied and watched. This is my preface to a study of human brotherhood in its three forms, which are (1) our relation to our equals or companions by the way, (2) our relation to the unfortunate, the weak and the ignorant, and (3) our relation to the superior persons or teachers. Brotherhood is a great truth, but the idea of it has its danger.

### LAME DOGS AND STILES

To many it has come to mean a life of [Page 118] benevolence, or helpfulness, No one can object to this, if it does not occupy the giver's time with a mere repetition of old activities which do not exercise his intelligence and educate his understanding, or if it does not prevent that best of all brotherhood, the proper relations between equals, the friendship which is the charity that begins at home, or if it does not trench upon the individuality of those who are helped. If people are helped so that afterwards they can help themselves, it is good. If not, it is bad, and the benevolence is only a mask for the indulgence of weak vanity. Certainly it was good to help Russia's millions of starving children, to carry food to them across thousands of miles of land and sea. It was intelligent, without blighting common life. It was an act of brotherhood towards the unfortunate and weak.

All brotherhood in this class is of temporary utility. We feed the destitute only that they may become strong enough to feed themselves. And we teach the ignorant so that in future we shall not need to teach them, because they will teach themselves. These things are not gifts, but a contribution to the common work. We have received from mankind; now let us do our share of giving. Those Russian [Page 119] children will owe more to the men who have taught or will teach the people to live, that is to say, to use their intelligence, their love and their energy, and use them all together, so that such a state of desperate need may never occur again.

Similarly in the great Japanese earthquake of 1923, the Americans instantly conveyed great help to the stricken people, who were as helpless as the victims of a railway accident, and could resort only to the virtues of courage, fortitude and endurance. They helped a lame dog over a stile, but nobody suggests, except in some religious circles, that the lame dog should be carried all along the road.

There are special times in which we can help one another, as the expression is, but let us recognize that this is not normal living, and that those who are being helped are not at the moment making progress, are not themselves evolving. They are merely being "saved". There may be some personal satisfaction, which I would call emotional dissipation, in carrying a lame dog all along the road, but in that case, there is no progress either for the carrier or for the dog.

It may be argued that there is affectionate feeling, and that that involves living and [Page 120] evolution. But people who carry lame dogs all along the road usually do so to gratify their own feelings, not for real love. They must have someone to help, or they are at a loss to know what to do with themselves. But the true test of the living which is love is in association with those who do not need our help. It is easy to be kind to the unfortunate,

the ignorant, the inferior, because that at the same time ministers to our pride, but what is much more needed is kindness or friendliness to equals in ordinary life.

If you have reason to go to a doctor, he may possibly give two things — pills to modify the indigestion and wisdom to think about. Quite frequently the latter is forgotten, or I must say, in justice to the doctors, is not wanted, and would be resented. Our doctors know quite well that most of our diseases and ill-health are not natural, but the result of idleness, indulgence, disordered imagination and sensuality — in other words they are all superstitious, physical, emotional and mental. Sometimes this is openly recognized, as when a certain little boy went into a chemist's shop and piped forth; “Please, sir, mother wants a bottle of indigestion mixture, because we are going to have crumpets for tea in our house [Page 121] All help is medicine. If I were a doctor I should be a poor man, for I would give wisdom with my pills.

It is said that in civilized lands, as they are called, our doctors have caused more disease than they have cured, but this must not be misunderstood. It means that people become less careful about their health because they think that the doctor is there to cure them, or at least to relieve them of their pain. Let the man think that he can live without exertion (that is to say, can enjoy sensations without true living) and it is all up with him. Cannot people recognize that every step upwards is self-taken, that we can receive help in all outside things, but not in growth or evolution? The only thing of *permanent* value that the doctor can supply is his wisdom, and that cannot be given, it must be received.

All life is like learning a language. To learn it we must speak it, and badly at first. If someone else speaks for us until we can speak well we shall never speak well. Every helper becomes a parasite unless his help is for the moment, and is in the nature of exchange, or his contribution to the common lot. It is this exchange that constitutes true brotherhood; it is not gift, except in so far as our contribution [Page 122] to the common lot of things is made in the spirit of gift, without thinking of the particular return or the particular exchange that we shall receive, though we know full well that it must be received.

## **BROTHERHOOD NOT SENTIMENTAL**

We need not make brotherhood sentimental in order to fill it full of happy goodwill and affection. It is best based on the theory of exchange, for even exchange is ensured by the

law, anyhow, and it hurts nobody's feelings, Madame Blavatsky used to say that people never forgive those whom they have injured, and it is almost equally difficult to forgive those who have helped us. The old Hindu theory was that a gift should always be made absolutely freely, as the Americans would say “without any strings to it”, even in thought or feeling. The Indian *sannyasi* will take no gift that is not absolutely unconditional, and his own services are given free.

If a gift is true, I have no sense of being a giver. If the help is genuine, I have no thought of being a helper. It is all too natural for that. And if in India the recipient does [Page 123] not say “Thank you” it is often because he does not want to offend me with what is practically an accusation of selfishness. He receives as freely as I give, and in return he will give as freely as he has received. Though we recognize that brotherhood is based on even exchange, we need not bargain. It is better to live more universally, and trade with the cash of love.

The power of brotherhood depends on individuality. There is no brotherhood in a row of pins. Football is better education than rowing, because in the latter you simply pull together, but in the former you use individual intelligence as well. I would not call rowing team work; it is nearer slavery. Yet there is all the difference in the world between individuality and selfishness — let us not confuse them. I may be interested in the welfare of my family, my community, my country. My individuality is all the greater and all the stronger for that. Selfishness is the narrow individuality of one who is really interested in nothing outside his own skin, except in so far as it affects what is inside that skin. Human individuality can be as strong as cheese and yet as big as the world. Individualities cross without interference, like rays of light, They [Page 124] are without bounds. In each a universal character and impulse shines forth, for each is a center without a circumference.

Brotherhood leads to organized work, and what we have of this in the world shows what its power might easily be. Brotherhood is a sort of divine arithmetic, in which two and two do not make four, but forty, four hundred and even four thousand. Because we have some of it in the world the average person can now enjoy the use in a single day of things which he could not have made for himself, living alone in a separate world, in ten thousand years.

Brotherhood is the expression of our inward unity, and is such that the power of many is reflected in each man's life. Some day it will be the power of all. How marvellous will

human life be when nearly all men have learned to put their very best talent into the common stock.

But each man grows by what he puts into the common stock, not by what he takes out of it. His effort in contributing develops his capacity to receive. Without any capacity you would sleep blissfully through apparently empty time and space, where others with capacity would find varied and busy life, [Page 125] Individuals share achievements when they are more or less at the same level, and their capacity to share depends upon their making their own contribution.

## **LOYALTY TO ALL**

Brotherhood is so great and so deep a truth that it can never be entirely escaped. Personal likes and dislikes are both swept into its service. There are no enemies. All human contacts are beneficial. The man who hurts our feelings or puts obstacles in the way of our plans, or presents to our vision the ugliness of dissipation or cruelty, has his high uses. He teaches me very forcibly what not to do, as others teach me what to do. And if gratitude is owing to the one, it is also due to the other. I might say: "Thank you, friend, you have done that for me, so that now I need not do it. You have saved me some of the misery of future lives." And if somebody injures me, as the common idea is, I think I might reasonably go down on my knees and beg his pardon, for if that had not been coming to me, he could not have found himself in that unhappy state.

It is for this reason that loyalty to persons [Page 126] is wrong in principle. I have known some people whom I would call great, but have found in each case that there was something to learn from them of what not to do. Like everybody else they are here to learn, and since all people, even to the very threshold of human perfection, are engaged in getting rid of their faults, and displaying them in the process, no one is an objective ideal. Besides, each man has his own talent, his own experience, his own problem. We are bound to live our own lives, and do *the* best we know. Even if it is not *the* best, it will bring us to that. To silence our own thoughts because others "know better" leads only to confusion and pointless life. Each has his plot of ground, though all plots do make a public park.

Edison cannot be the leader of inventors, because there are other inventors, and many of them have arisen in places where even he would have least expected them. He may be the



greatest inventor — but that is another matter. He cannot invent everything, and the others will come nearest to new truths when they are least like sheep.

Let us clearly recognize the difference between leaders and great people. All men [Page 127] are our friends, but no men are our masters. We meet in our bodies like leaves upon a tree. The same one life vitalizes all, and by that we are united, not by any strings tied from one leaf to another. The tree holds together by its own one life, and needs no veil or net cast over it to prevent its falling apart. [Page 128]

## CHAPTER 11

<b>MASTERS</b>	<b>AND</b>
<b>MEN</b>	

### THE LIBERATED MAN

THE theosophical world seems to be dividing itself on the old question: which is more important for educative purposes, environment or character? Nobody of any consequence has ever suggested that character can be implanted by environment. No Theosophist proposes the method of the builder, which assumes that a man evolves as a house is built, that he is a vacant site to which you bring various materials and there build them up into a house. Nor the method of the sculptor, which assumes that human character is crude stone and someone must from the outside chip away the unwanted portions, just as a sculptor takes a block of stone and leaves a statue, which in a sense was in the stone all the time. Thousands of forms were in that stone; the sculptor chooses one. But every man is a living being with a character of his own. [Page 129]

By Masters we mean those men who have realized the goal of human life and are no longer in bondage to things. They know the world of life. So they regard the temporary creations as merely a shadow-world. They may remain in that world, using human bodies, but they are interested as teachers in calling people to enter their world, which is the world of life.

Those who recognize the life never become builders or sculptors of men, but may be gardeners or teachers, who know that every seed will grow according to its kind, that both the pattern that is to be made and the power with which it is to be built come from within the seed itself. Therefore no thoughtful writer has ever suggested that Masters can give life to anybody or can evolve anybody or can help anybody to evolve themselves. They can give money, and have been known to do so. And they can give thought-forms. But they cannot *give* growth or evolution, understanding or love or power.

The Theosophical Society has the same function as the Masters. Its purpose is not to attempt to feed the people, but to call their attention to great truths with which they can feed, clothe, shelter, amuse and educate themselves [Page 130] as men, without the suffering which they have been bringing upon themselves so long, Its first object — brotherhood — is to be understood in this deep and essential way. Greater than any material gift is the offering of wisdom.

Consider understanding. It is one of the powers of our life. It is tested by power, for if I have made a machine, and it will not work, that tells me that my understanding was wrong, Let me tell a story about thought-power, which is vouched for by some good and honorable friends. In a certain city in America there was over a deep gully a bridge which came popularly to be known as “suicide bridge”, because from it a number of people threw themselves to destruction every year. A group of friends who were accustomed to experimenting with thought-power decided to meet once a week, fix their attention upon that bridge, and think thoughts of cheerfulness, strength and hope. They told me that since they had begun the practice, which was about two years before, there had not been a single suicide from that bridge. I cannot personally vouch for their accuracy, but I can easily believe in such an occurrence, because I have had other striking experiences of the power of thought.

What would happen in this case ? The [Page 131] thought-form acts as one speaking. It says: “Come now, things are not as bad as they have appeared, and besides there is a possibility of happy life, which you really want. Please do not lose your balance, but consider the facts.” Reason prevails, and the would-be suicide changes his mind. The thought-form reminds him at a critical moment of ideas which had been obscured in his troubled mind.

This is good work, of course, in the way of lifting a lame dog over a stile, but now there is life to be lived and it must live in its own strength. Every teacher recognizes that, however simple may be the idea which he is putting before his class, no student will

grasp it until he has made some effort of attention and of thought. There is a moment between the hearing of his words or the seeing of the experiment that he is doing, and the student's understanding. In that moment the student thinks, and nobody can do it for him.

Consider in the same way the work of an artist. With skill he produces beauty. Beauty is the test of skill, as power is the test of knowledge, and both these come from inward effort alone. Painting pictures for a man who has no hands will not make him into a painter — or even for a man who has hands.[Page 132] Carrying babies does not teach them to walk. On the contrary, I knew a naughty little boy who when about four years old would insist upon being carried up hill when out for a walk. He had been carried too much.

Similarly, the guiding lines given to us when we are learning to write prevent us from writing straight, because they teach us to think that they are necessary. Only a few days ago I was writing a letter on an unruled writing block. Suddenly I said to myself: “Why, I am writing straight, without lines !” From that moment my writing became crooked. Such is the power of suggestion. Crutches are only for cripples. You do not teach a baby to walk with crutches.

## **THE MASTER'S PRESENCE**

If people think they *need* a personal Master, by that thought they destroy their own power and delay their own progress. If they think they could do better with a personal Master than without one, it is the same thing. If they could, he would be there. There are two kinds of persons to whom the Masters cannot communicate their contribution to the common brotherhood — those who cannot get [Page 133] on with them, and those who cannot get on without them. But really there is no need to search for a teacher, because when we start learning he is always there. The entire galaxy of all who have attained liberation or entered into the world of life is always at hand, for they are the one life, which is also our essential life. No one can shut that open door.

The Masters work behind the scenes, and are not out of touch with any part of life. Some one wrote to Madame Blavatsky and asked to be put in connection with the Brothers. Her reply was: “ Do you know so little of the laws of their order as not to understand that by this very act of yours — which was entirely unsolicited and a spontaneous proof of your

loyalty — you have drawn their attention to you already, and that you have established relations with them yourself ?

“ It is not within our power to do anything for you more. Occultism is not like Christianity, which holds out to you the false promise of mediatorial interference and vicarious merit. Every one of us must work his own way up towards the Brothers. If you want to see them, act so as to compel them to let you do so. They are equally with all of us subject to the laws of attraction and repulsion; [Page 134] those who most deserve their companionship get it. Take a half hour each morning upon first rising, and in an undisturbed place free from all noises and bad influences concentrate your thoughts upon them and upon your own higher self, and will that you shall become wise, and illuminated and powerful.”

## **THE MASTER'S WORK**

What then does a Master do? He is a witness to the life beyond all appearances, even his own. As fire tells us not to burn ourselves, so does the Master tell us not to forget ourselves. People forget themselves not only in anger sometimes, but in a thousand things and nearly always.

The Master's human form is beautiful because his life is true. Consider the beautiful limbs of a race horse They have been produced quite naturally by life trying to run. What would be the use of a small horse worshipping that beauty of limb ? He must run. So the Master says to us: “ Do not worship me. Know that there is life which can be fulfilled in full living, and from which all beauty, truth and love will flow.”

I can realize that the Masters see benefit [Page 135] wherever people are trying to express their life, even though there be grave attendant defects. Let me take a crude and rather painful example — that of the old practice of foot-binding in China. This was not done, as some have suggested, to keep women in subjection to men, but, as Chinese poets have explained, as an assertion of human superiority to earth, that women might not be gross and earthly, like men, but delicate as a flower that sways lightly upon its slender stem. It was an attempt to express beauty and spirituality, somewhat similar to the old Western custom of tight-lacing the figure. They have now recognized the folly and harmfulness of these external means, that small and beautiful feet belong to those who balance

themselves and walk well, and that the shapely waist is produced by healthy activity, so that if we have it not in our age as well as in our youth it is entirely our own fault.

Yet the main point of all this, the abiding good of it, is that they show an effort. However ignorant they were, they were well-meant, and were therefore in their degree expressions of life. Whenever mankind puts itself to some trouble for an idea, however stupid, it is good, for there will then be progress. There is no [Page 136] room for ridicule, and little for interference or correction.

There is great danger in what is usually called devotion. True devotion is respect for the beautiful, the good and the true, wherever it may be seen. It is respect for life. But most devotion implies disrespect for life, inasmuch as it singles out one expression of life for its fervent admiration, and almost equally despises the rest. So is God shut away, as people go into caves to worship the sun.

True devotion has nothing to do with that self-abasement which makes a man think that because he is inferior to another he must not rely on his own judgment. However evolved or unevolved he may be, that is exactly what he must do. The man who does not make his own vision of the goal for himself does not awaken to the full his own life in the present moment of living, and therefore does not make the most use possible for him of that moment.

There is always some danger even when virtues are extolled. Such praise implies or suggests that they are beyond ordinary life, and the feeling arises; "It would be uncommonly good of us if we did this. We are not quite expected to do it". In India I find when [Page 137] some attainment is mooted, there will be someone to say; "O, but that is for those who have taken the yellow robe".

I have come across some cases of partial mental paralysis due to misuse of the idea of Masters. I have heard one say; "This work has failed; that shows that the Masters did not want it." It was perfectly clear to me that the cause of the failure was that he had not used his brains in the work under reference. Then again, when the thought was habitually turned to the Master as if he were a separate entity, in moments of difficulty, for example, when there was a blank in conversation, the man would find himself able to think only of the Master's name. And also in danger, or in any crisis, do you pray or do you keep your head? You cannot do both. Every occasion is a crisis, did people but recognize it.

But what of Master's authority ? Does he not know more than we? The Master is a witness of the light, but it is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. His form is only an illusion; it is not our goal, but our life, which is also his life, is our goal. There cannot be a *form* of a Master. There is nothing unusual in this. In a chemistry class the professor is not our goal, but chemistry [Page 138] is our goal. Leaf whispers to leaf, and tells rejoicingly of the life it feels, like lovers hand in hand looking at the same moon. It is the power of love that with it we thus at last come to look with all eyes at all things.

And Master's work and orders ? I see no use in them unless they are our own work and orders at the same time. If a man does his honest best he will be doing what the Master wants to have done. If our understanding rises to what the Masters call their mind-plane their ideas become our ideas, we think their thoughts with them, and there is nothing to be gained by insisting that the ideas or purposes are theirs, not ours, which is a mode of separation of the Masters and ourselves, and tends to prevent our union in the one life.

You cannot have this separation in fact. You cannot have men gradually making their own noses perfect according to their own thoughts, feelings and actions, and at the same time the Masters moulding those noses according to some external plan. Masters' work and orders are surely a question of our being attuned to their spirit and their law, which is our own true spirit and law, In that service (if such it can be called) is perfect freedom, [Page 139] Their teaching is an intuition, but not usually peculiar and distinguishable from what we call our own thought. There is no necessity to import into the idea of our relation to Masters the dramatic and separative characteristics of human domination or interference by man with man. Masters are masters of life not masters of men. [Page 143]

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## **PART II**

### **HAPPENINGS BY THE WAY**

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#### **CHAPTER 12**

## THE MEANING OF THEOSOPHY

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, when I was a comparatively young theosophist (that was in the days when young theosophists were meant to be seen, not heard), I wrote a book dealing with every aspect of theosophy from a natural point of view. It was some months before I could induce any elderly theosophist of my acquaintance even to turn over the pages, but at last one locally revered, if somewhat testy, elder consented to look through it. After some little time he returned it to me with slightly disparaging remarks about my presumption — apparently what was new in it was not true, and what was true in it was not new, and in the main it erred on the side of not being true, With the beautiful humility of the young theosophists of those days I put the visible results of six months' strenuous thinking into the fire, though there were also invisible results which remained indelibly stamped upon my personal brain and character. [Page 144] I have since realized that my old acquaintance, though very respectably full of knowledge, was not really a theosophist, and did not even know what theosophy meant, so after many years I have set myself once more to write upon natural theosophy.

Let us think to the fullest possible extent of all the people in the world at this moment. Some are in cities, some in the country. Some are on the land, some on the sea, some deep in the mines, some few flying about in the air. Some are dressed, some undressed. Some are well-fed and busy with gossip; others are half-starved and busy with common duties and work. One man does not know how the rest of the world lives, and even to think of it in imagination comes to him with rather a shock of surprise. It seems so strange that all those people can be doing all those things, and can be so completely engrossed by them.

With this picture before the mind I ask the question: Can it be that all the different things with which all these people are concerned are of no importance, that God or Nature has arranged the things of life with such futility that in order to reach what is really worth while — happiness and perfection — people must put aside all that life, [Page 145] all those things and the feelings and thoughts which they engender, and must take to something else, some particular and special mode of activity or thought ?

Some so-called religious authorities have said so again and again, and have prescribed out of millions of possible activities one or two which alone, they declare, can lead to salvation or happiness, and have denounced the rest as a waste of time, if nothing worse. But with the picture of the full life of the millions of people in all their variety before our mental vision we see the absurdity of these narrow paths, the impossibility of these stupid

prescriptions. On the contrary, we see that all experience is good. All these millions of whirling atoms, making their ever-changing forms, like pictures in the glowing embers or in the clouds or, if you like, even in the tea cups, are awakening in the people who experience them a response to truth or the completeness of life as surely as there is a meaning in these printed words, which in themselves are only funny marks.

This reverent attitude towards *all* experience is the theosophic life. Thousands of years ago theosophy was declared to be the knowledge that man is never sundered from [Page 146] God. Theosophy is the belief that man can know God, and more than that, that man is knowing God. We cannot lay irreverent hands upon this vast creation, and say: “Away with you, mocker, tempter, seducer who would imprison our souls and stifle our lives.” Subjectivism is no theosophy, but is a denial of the divine only one degree less egregious than that which prevailed in the Dark Ages of Europe, when it was said that both the world of nature and the mind of man were the seat of the devil, and the less we had to do with either the better.

We recognize the wisdom of primal impulses, such as that of the man in the street who defines his life (if ever called upon to do so) not as a set of thoughts and feelings, but as the interplay on that line of time where his consciousness meets his experience. He might say: “My life ? I drink, and fight, and fall down and get up again, and a policeman takes me away.” The common man is suspicious of subjectivism — with just cause,

Every development in human consciousness — of the will or love or thought — calls into real being the material partner in our life, so that at each step the two fit perfectly, like a man and a woman dancing together as one being. [Page 147] Suppose that I have done some work, such as that of designing and building a house. In course of time the house is worn away or falls down. The work was not lost, because while I was consciously building the house I was unconsciously building my character, developing my capacity for thought, feeling and will. But my future life will not consist in the mere passive enjoyment of these qualities of consciousness. Those qualities will come forth to meet a new arrangement of the world, which will once more exercise them according to their new condition, and will provide new difficulties or problems or tasks which will still further cultivate their strength. My world grows greater as I grow stronger, and I expect that the whole world will become my world when I have harmonized my consciousness with all consciousness. We have no reason to anticipate either perfection or happiness in separation.



In all the world there is greater life than that which we already know, and it is ever ready to flow into us. We cannot contemplate the beauty of a sunset without afterwards being more harmonious or peaceful, and thereby stronger than before. This is what I mean by God — the greater life all round us, which is ever at hand [Page 148] to give us its truth, its unity and its beauty, We do not know the extent or the height of that greatness, but to know it as ever-present is to rejoice in *all* experience and drink the very nectar of life.

The truth of this attitude is evident even in common things. If a man invents a motorcar according to principles which he has thought out in his mind, he will learn in what particulars his thoughts were accurate, and will at least to some extent correct the erroneous part of them, when he tries the machine out on the road. Meditation is one part of learning and experience the other, and between these two our consciousness must constantly pass, like the shuttle in the loom.

It is the sign of a theosophist that his devotion is complete. He is a knower of God everywhere, and therefore he accepts all experience willingly, while others prejudge every item of it according to their pleasure and pain, or the comforts and discomforts of the body, the emotions and the mind. I knew a man who met with a serious motor accident which kept him in bed several months; when he was getting better he told me he was very glad that it had happened, because it had caused him to learn to love the members of his family more [Page 149] than before. A man thrown into prison might say: “Now I have an opportunity to meditate”.

There is always something worth while that we can do, and thereby be active, positive, alive. There is always something to be gained by willingness. Said Epictetus: “There is only one thing for which God has sent me into the world, namely, to perfect my own character in all kinds of virtue, and there is nothing in all the world that I cannot use for that purpose.”

The theosophist should be free, because no experience happens contrary to his will. He should be free also because he knows the unity in the life as well as in the form. Thus if I have no carriage and must walk, and I see another man who has a carriage and can ride, and is happy in riding, can I not enjoy the fact of his happiness ? If it is a question of possessions, all things are mine which my brother men are enjoying for me. This is to be a theosophist. It is not fantastic, but simple fact, and the only liberation.

No one can narrow down theosophy into a religion, a creed, or a church, without destroying it in the process. It is true that many theosophists (not all) believe in reincarnation and *karma* as laws of nature, but belief in those laws does not make people theosophists. It is, [Page 150] knowledge of the presence of God or the larger life which makes the theosophist, and it is because we are theosophists first that most of us can easily believe in reincarnation and *karma* afterwards. Because we value experience we consider that there should be more of it.

I doubt if anybody, were he to search to the bottom of his heart, would acknowledge belief in a religion, that is to say a special set of actions or thoughts prescribed as leading to union with God. The basis of religion is intuitive in every one of us. It is seen in our instinctive response to beauty, to truth and to goodness, which is goodwill or unity. What do we want more than goodness, truth and beauty, and will we not accept them everywhere ?

In our consciousness truth is understanding, goodness or unity is love, and beauty is peace and calm strength, which is the same as freedom. The world perpetually educates us in these powers, and when we have them we find that we live more, and in so doing create goodness, truth and beauty through all our acts. This creation is union with the one will; therefore in it man finds his unchanging happiness.[Page 151]

It is the part of our reason to recognize that all things are beneficial; of our love, that all persons are helpful; and of our will, to rejoice in the adventure of life.

This is natural theosophy. Within it there is room for all sciences, popular or occult, for all art, religion, philosophy, and common life. It is for all men, for it is the understanding of life — *theos* being life, and *sophia* the understanding. This is the theosophy of ancient India and the early Mediterranean world, and it has also been the theosophy of modern times for those who have not confused the part with the whole and mistaken some departments of knowledge for the whole truth, and some limited activities for life itself.[Page 152]

## **CHAPTER 13**

### **LIFE AFTER DEATH**

IF we say that life is for experience we mean that circumstances enrich consciousness. A scientist learns by experiment, and while so learning develops his intelligence, so that

after a given investigation he not only knows more, but has also gained in capacity, and is now able to grasp a larger idea (one containing more, and more varied, constituent details) than he could before. An artist who is composing a picture, or a piece of music or poetry, formulates his idea in his mind, but while he is working it out on paper he is learning by experiment and thus by experience in exactly the same way as the scientist.

We are all scientists and artists in some degree, all the time. There are three lines — all human effort to know is of the nature of science; all human effort to achieve some piece of work is of the nature of art; all human co-operation, however slight, is of the nature of love. Science teaches us the unity of the [Page 153] material or external world; co-operation teaches us the power, and therefore the truth, of the unity of conscious beings. Art teaches us the still greater unity of consciousness and matter, that is, of what are sometimes called the subjective and the objective.

We have not stated the whole of the fact, however, when we have said that life is for experience, or circumstances enrich consciousness. Consciousness is also for the enrichment of circumstances. Life does not consist in the subjective contemplation of possible circumstances. For each one of us life exists on that line of time where our consciousness meets our world. Without the circumstances consciousness would not be what it is; without the consciousness circumstances would not be what they are.

*My world is the world as specifically related to my consciousness. My consciousness is likewise the consciousness as specifically related to my world. There is thus a twofold education proceeding through the influence of the world and the consciousness, which are behind my world and my consciousness. Because of this, there is tuition and intuition — instruction by experience from the world, and through contemplation from the [Page 154] consciousness. Surely if this were even faintly and distantly understood we should hear no more of subjectivism and the “reflection” theory as theosophical philosophy or explanation of life. Theosophy is the finding of the infinite in the finite.*

Every one of our activities of consciousness shows the same duality of nature, and in practice the same shuttle-like action. By thought we perceive and observe, and judge (which is only a deeper observing) the things of the world and the relations between them. But thought is also a creative power. Knowledge is power, not simply in the sense that if we have knowledge we consequently know how to act, but in the deeper sense that all action is knowledge and nothing more.

When several actions are considered in consciousness, and the consideration ceases and contemplation of an action begins, the action takes place. To decide that a glass shall be lifted is to stop considering whether it shall be lifted or not, and to contemplate its being lifted, and that alone. Then the hand moves and the glass is lifted. The hand lifts: the glass, but the thought lifts the hand. And if there be some actions which are reflex or involuntary in the body, they represent [Page 155] “lapsed” intelligence, just as a motor car does, for we have made it and there it is, expressing our thought at the time of making.

Similarly the twofold action of love or human feeling is shown in its sympathy, which is perception of the consciousness of another, and in its active goodwill or love-power. And once more, the twofold action of the will is to be seen in the concentration of consciousness which we call decision, and in the concentration of action which results in skill and therefore produces beauty, that is, in art.

If we have established an understanding of the double teaching of life, through tuition and intuition, through experience and contemplation, we shall readily understand the reason for death and what happens after death. In experience we see what happens; in contemplation we understand. Let us take the simile of reading a book. I see the printed letters; a fraction of a second later I understand their meaning. The understanding is always, at bottom, intuitive, or from the consciousness.

When the consciousness becomes overloaded with facts and a long period of contemplation is requisite for the understanding of the facts, death is necessary. Death is the cessation of the accumulation of experiences. The experiments [Page 156] and observations have ceased; now is the time for contemplation, for the education of consciousness. The child has learned some letters; now he shall understand their combination, the meaning of their unity. As people grow older objects make less and less impression upon them, because their attention is more and more taken up with their accumulated experiences, which are incoherent and confused. Even the most avid enthusiast for crossword puzzles or chess problems will stop when he has collected a certain quantity of unfinished problems, and will show irritation if more are thrust upon him. Then, if you ask him for a word of eleven letters indicating the Queen of Sheba's little toe ring, he will say: “Oh, wait a bit; I must clear up some of these others first” — or other words to that effect.

It is the people who have most completely thought out their problems as they have traveled the road of life, and who have thereby kept their minds simple (however full) who enjoy a keen interest in experience for the longest time. Old age comes late for them;

for even the decay of the physical body and brain are related to the loss of interest in experience. An illustration showing the influence of mind occurred in a statement made by the famous [Page 157] physician, Sir James Crichton-Browne, at his eighty-seventh birthday party, when he was asked for a recipe for long life, and he said, among other things: "Those keep going longest who love most."

We come into the world to learn. We can say that the world is the scripture of God, or that the world is God's school for man, if we remember that the similes are not complete and we guard against being led into the false but plausible suppositions of subjectivism. We come to learn, but it must be confessed that at death we go away without having learned more than a fraction of the lessons contained in the material that we have gathered, in our accumulation of experiences. There has been much observation and experiment; now, there must be reflection and contemplation. The shuttle has been moving to the objective side: now it must return to the subjective, though these terms objective and subjective must be understood only relatively, and as meaning nothing more than gathering experience and thinking it out.

What then, should happen after death ? The after-death state is the subjective result of the objective experiences of the life-period (or rather, body-period) just closed. It is not [Page 158] a state for the meeting of new facts. The man is no longer sitting at dinner; he is digesting and assimilating the food which he has taken into his system — that particular food and no other. He has set going in himself many feelings and thoughts, for his experience is accumulated in the form of thoughts and feelings about objects and persons. Now he has to do two things — eliminate the waste and absorb the nutriment. He is to read a book, and as he grasps the significance of what is on each page, he tears that page out and throws it away, keeping the understanding and discarding the book. Thus he gradually becomes a wise man along the lines of his experience, and develops new capacity for thought and feeling, or the understanding of life.

The succession of two stages in the after-death life, which is mentioned so widely, though often with great crudity, in religious traditions, is perfectly natural. Purgatory and heaven correspond to elimination and assimilation. If a dead man's desire is to sit at his cottage door with a pipe and a mug of beer and a newspaper, he may very well sit there, as so many clairvoyants and mediums have described him as doing. But he will not sit there for ever, because it will gradually dawn upon him that [Page 159] the cottage, the chair, the pipe, the beer and the newspaper are not what he really wants. Why should I read an idea in a book, if I have that idea in my own mind and can think it without the book ? In such a case the book would be a burden. Any experience would be a burden if we had already assimilated its lesson.

When men die they can do what they like. But they cannot usually govern their own likes and dislikes or wishes, unless they have been very much in the habit of doing so while on earth. In the body “second thoughts” are possible as they are not possible after death. It is the characteristic of the bodily life that it is obstructive, Even the brain and body mechanism, though specially adapted to the transmission of thought and feeling, are to some extent obstructive, so that if we have a desire or thought, before it passes into action another may come chasing after it so as to modify or even cancel it. I might desire to strike somebody, but stop myself in time, that is, before the action takes place. Not so, however, when released from the body and brain. When a man has lost that ballast his first feeling or thought will take entire possession of him, and hurry him away into the action or to [Page 160] the object with which it is concerned. Therefore, no doubt, we hear that in the finer grade of matter which is usually called the astral plane, dead men and women go to the objects of their desire or surround themselves with them. The desires succeed one another; when one is finished with, another comes out of memory or habit. Thus the dead gradually set aside their attachment to objects and establish states of mind and feeling by which they can in future lives make use of those objects for greater purposes of the life, instead of being held by them in a kind of bondage or servitude.

But men's attachments are of two kinds — to material things, and to their fellow-beings. There is knowledge, or the understanding of things; there is also love, or the understanding of living beings. Love in any of its forms (parental, filial, devotional, brotherly, friendly, etc.), is a greater delight than the fulfilment of any material desire. Therefore it is essential to any real heaven or truly happy state. Witness the well-known story in The *Mahâbhârata*, in which king Yudhishtira is depicted as going to heaven, but not finding there the brothers whom he loved. He told the angels that they ought not to expect him to be happy there, while he had not the company of his [Page 161] beloved brothers, no matter how excellent the climate, and how well-furnished the countryside with all that might delight the senses of man. He would rather go to hell if they were there; to be with them in that state would be more like heaven than to be in these beautiful gardens and palaces without them.

If we die without much understanding, we also die without much love. I have loved my father and mother, and wife and friend. But how much ? Do we not often rebuke ourselves for not loving them as they deserve to be loved, and do we not sometimes feel how much more we would love them if only we could ? We have developed the *possibilities* of love rather than love itself. It is therefore natural that when, during the “purgatorial” period, we have divested our attention of the material affections which occupied its imagination or field of vision, we should, by the same subjective process, arrive at the state in which our love-desires come forth and create their own realities of the subtle world, in which we may love with an ever-increasing quality of love, until we

have developed in our character a capacity along those specific lines beyond anything of which we were capable on earth, except in the most fleeting glimpses in our [Page 162] rarest and best moments ? Have I loved beauty and truth as well as living beings ? How much ? And do not we cherish these also from seed to bud and from bud to flower in the “heaven life”?

If, therefore, some clairvoyants tell us that they see people in heaven enjoying the company of those whom they have loved on earth, amid, scenes consonant with those with which experience has filled their minds on earth, we can say: “That is not unnatural; your testimony is interesting, but we did not really need it, for the process is eminently logical.” [Referring to this “heaven-life”, the following is written in the *Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*: “Change there must be, for that dream life is but the fruition, the harvest-time of those psychic seed-germs dropped from the tree of physical existence in our moments of dreams and hopes, fancy glimpses of bliss and happiness stifled in an ungrateful social soil, blooming in the rosy dawn of *Devachan*, and ripening under its ever-fructifying sky. No failures there, no disappointments. There, all unrealized hopes, aspirations, dreams, become fully realized, and the dreams of the objective become the realities of the subjective existence.” Another letter says: Many of the subjective spiritual communications — most of them when the sensitives are pure minded — are real; but it is most difficult for the uninitiated medium to fix in his mind the true and correct pictures of what he sees and hears,” The term initiation here refers to the final human initiation.]

“But how interesting to establish communication [Page 163] with the dead, and hear their opinions and descriptions of their new state !” No more interesting at present than chemistry to a musician. Each man will have his turn. Meantime, it is better generally not to disturb their reflections. “But can we not have some material evidence for the existence of a man as mind in regions of subtle matter ?” By all means. If reason does not suffice, there is no lack of experimental science in this field. Read the researches of Geley, Drayton Thomas, Crawford. Consider the “wax gloves”, the “ newspaper tests”, the “cross references”, the evidences of sensation without nerves and action without muscles; and you will soon find perfectly natural causes to believe in the existence of finer matter and the operation within it of the peculiar characteristics of the human mind. [Page 164]

## CHAPTER 14

### REINCARNATION

IN the last chapter I described the course of a human life as consisting of two phases — life in the body, and life after death. All this is really one continuous life. When the hands

of a clock have passed the number 6, they begin to go upwards instead of downwards, yet it is all part of one continuous movement. It is only from a limited point of view, which has no reality for the clock, that we speak of upward and downward. So also do we speak of the life before death and the life after death. Life in the body is more objective, and is used mainly for gathering experience; life after death in the mind-planes is more subjective, and is used for turning it over, thinking about it, understanding it, converting it into wisdom.

The mind of a man at the beginning of the subjective period is like a wilderness where thousands of plants are growing in a hustling and chaotic manner, with no orderly relation to one another. At the end of that period it is [Page 165] like a smiling garden, in which there is no competition between one plant and another, for the weeds have been thrown away (or rather they have been chopped up and dug into the soil) and the fair plants have been cultivated to great beauty and in harmonious relation to one another. In other words, the numerous half-formed feelings and unfinished thoughts are developed and sorted until the mind has become organic, simple, as a motorcar is simple because it contains no unrelated or useless or unessential parts. The diversity or variety may be great, but the unity of harmonious relations is over all, and therefore there is simplicity. How simple it is to raise an arm, though in that action some hundreds of adjustments in the body are involved. At the end of the subjective life the mind becomes simple like that. It acts as one thing; that is character.

Character is simple, though it may not be complete, just as a motor-car is simple but is capable of alterations and additions. When we act from character we do not act from memory. The body has character, because if we would walk we need not think of every muscle and tendon that is involved in the movement. A man has character when his [Page 166] mind is simple and he decides and thinks from a center that is not confused. Suppose you had a motor-car, and every time you returned from a journey you disassembled its parts. Every time you wanted to use it you would have to reassemble them. That is the state of the average mind. It has many parts which have never been assembled. It has to be partially assembled every time it is used, and the assembling is rarely well done. When it has a problem, it must remember what happened yesterday, last month, and last year in similar connections. If it had permanently assembled those experiences of yesterday and last month and last year as they came along it would not need to remember them now. It could act from its integral character.

Character is the working of a mind or consciousness of which every part is properly assembled or adjusted to unity, whether the number of parts be few or many, whether the man has much or little knowledge. The great powers of consciousness (knowledge, love and will) are all adjustments to unity: knowledge in the world, love in society, and the



will because it brings new power into the individual and the collective life. The great ideals of all men — truth, goodness and beauty — are visions [Page 167] of unity. That is why they are guiding stars for us through the fields of chaos.

The search for truth which is science discloses the unity of all the material world, shows that no particle is loose or disconnected from the rest, but that there is a mantle of “law” thrown over all things, a mantle of many folds. The principle of truth expressed in human character also reveals the power of unity as inward law. Only as the mind is true to the man, true to the truth he already knows, free from disconnected fancies and faithful to coordinated knowledge, can it grow in mental power. Its sane function gives expression to the unity within its walls.

Similarly, goodness or good-will creates unity of feeling, which is the cement of cooperation; and this unity also discloses its value in the great power that it gives to human life. This ideal expresses itself in love, which is a declaration in terms of feeling of the perception of our real unity.

Beauty also is unity. In a picture, composition, which is unity, is essential to beauty, And the expression of beauty in human life is also composition, harmony, organic perfection, skill.

All ideals belong to character, Truth and [Page 168] thought go together; also goodness and love; also beauty and the will, which is the expression of our integrity.

I have mentioned these ideals at length, because they and they alone are the fruit of experience, of an incarnation. Thought, love and will are the powers of consciousness. Truth, goodness and beauty are universal reality, or life itself. Our sensations of the universal also correspond to these, and are understanding, happiness and freedom.

The objective period in a human life-cycle is mainly for gathering material; the subjective mainly for the building of character. This character *is* life. You cannot make a list of true facts, good deeds and beautiful things, for circumstances alter cases, as life is fluid. Not all the precedents in Halsbury's *Laws of England*, if made into commandments, could tell

us what to do and what not to do, but will, love and truth can always declare it. Character is living law.

To understand reincarnation one must know what character is, and how it is produced from experience.

When, at the end of the subjective period, the material gathered in a given lifetime (or rather bodytime) has been fully woven into [Page 169] character, it is time for the man to return to birth in this world, to make new and further experiments, to gather new materials of experience, to exercise and confirm his character. It would not be natural for the man to proceed onward and upward for ever in some spiritual realm, where the conditions of restraint, of obstacle, are not provided as they are provided in this material world. As has already been explained, men need necessity; in conditions of no restraint they will not face that part of life which they dislike or of which they are even slightly afraid, and also they will not know a millionth part of the variety of life. A certain great lady used to say: "If I knew the future I could not do my work." Certainly if men could determine the future (if they could predetermine the result of every experiment they make) there would be an end to education through experience, for they need not make the experiment. This world is a necessity for men. Looking round, we see that it provides for all the varieties of their necessities.

Some are but savages, with little mind; surely when they have assimilated the lessons of their present experience they will come back to earth for the kind of experience which we see all round us being gathered by men in a [Page 170] more civilized state of development. Surely it is here on earth also that the mediocre will return when the time comes for them to develop further the knowledge, the love, the skill which they desire, and on which they have already moderately embarked. If there were spiritual spheres in which exactly the same thing could be done as is being done in this material world, this world would not be a necessity for any one, even for one lifetime. Besides, two worlds of experience cannot be different and yet the same. Therefore reincarnation on earth is natural for those who have not reached the goal of human life. Therefore also men of spirit, while here, often feel like animals in cages; they pace to and fro, looking hungrily through the bars into the lands of freedom and understanding which they call ideals. They must conquer fire and water, earth, wind and sky by experiment, experience, knowledge, love and power, and so win freedom in this great cage.

Let me show by a common simile how character works at the time of reincarnation. I will take the case of Mr. Henry Ford? It is especially permissible as he is himself convinced

of the truth of reincarnation. Long ago, when he was designing his motor-car, he [Page 171] used to work at it himself in a little shop behind his house, and now and then the neighbors would see him trying the machine on the road, and they would look at one another and tap their foreheads significantly. Consider one of his days, and compare it with one incarnation, a day of life. In the morning, let us say, he would work on some part of the machine; in the afternoon he would try it on the road and see what happened (that is to say, he would experiment and observe); in the evening he would sit quietly reflecting upon what had happened on the road, until he had considered the significance of the afternoon's experience. Then he would come to a conclusion as to the next day's work, and he would say: "Well then, tomorrow morning I will alter such-and-such a point; I will do such-and-such a thing." So, the next morning, he would go to his workshop, not to puzzle over anything, but definitely to carry out the decision made the previous evening. Thus men come to re-birth with character, with purpose, with hunger for certain kinds of experiment and experience, and they do not need memory of past lives, which would be confusing and troublesome, and would delay the present work.

True knowledge is always power. Knowledge [Page 172] of reincarnation releases men's faculties for their fullest use. How many people envy the abilities of the great, yet do not strive for that which they so much want, because they think to themselves: "Alas, life is too short; I could not possibly become a great poet before I die." But he who knows reincarnation says to the despondent man, that is, to the average man: "Trust life to find a way for its fulfilment. Be a middling poet now, but the best middling poet that you can, or at least make a beginning, and you will surely in another life become the great poet that you want to become. Do not think of time nor of death; your present life and power are not yours by chance, but are the outcome of your past efforts, and your future will be the result of the present. Thought of the future is only useful if it inspires the present. Know that you are master of your destiny, and you can make your future of the kind you choose and as great as you choose. But you must do that now."

This knowledge removes inhibitions and releases our power. Even those who do not believe in human immortality must act as though they did if they would achieve great things; they must not consider that time is a [Page 173] great limitation, or dwell upon the idea or belief that chance is full of power to stand accidentally in the way of achievement. Time is opportunity to evolve. Those who believe in chance with respect to human life remind me of some of the Chinese, who are said to believe that harmful demons are lurking everywhere, and so to thwart them or mislead them they build queer gables and crooked entrances to their houses and hide inside, fearing the chances of open life. Similarly, primitive men fear thunder and lightning as the voice and weapon of an arbitrary god, a deity of chance moods, of unintelligible designs. When Benjamin Franklin sent up his kites to test the lightning many protested and said that he should be stopped in his blasphemous action, which would anger the god and bring his vengeance

upon mankind. In republican Rome it was punishable blasphemy to say that an eclipse of the sun was naturally caused; for the priests held that the gods were in trouble.

He who believes in reincarnation is he who regards even human immortality as a natural thing, subject to no arbitrariness. If we believe in reincarnation we fear nothing (except possibly our own folly) and all our [Page 174] powers are released for work which must surely bring its fruit. This knowledge satisfies the hungry will, and what man's will is not hungry in some degree, in what man's breast does not hope spring anew when opportunity is seen? Let us never think of reincarnation as a satisfaction of human desire for immortality, but only as knowledge which is power and opportunity. It is not for a solace, but to release the will. It is not to “provide time” but to assure them that nothing will cut them off from success until they have achieved. Yet reincarnation is not a necessity. It is a sign of our failure to live a fully human life, to employ in the midst of limitation all the organs of the soul.[Page 175]

## CHAPTER 15

### KARMA

ALL the objects presented to a man in his world of experience are his own work or karma. The literal translation of the word *karma* is “work” rather than “action”. It does not imply mere action, for which there are other words in common use in Sanskrit, but action with some purpose, that is to say, work. Each man paints a picture, which is his expression or work. Looking at it afterwards he is dissatisfied; he sees his own inadequacy. That is the utility of *karma*.

Every man's condition in life is the picture he has painted, and it represents himself as he was in character or in development of the powers of consciousness at the time of its painting — so much cruelty or affection, folly or thoughtfulness, clarity or confusion, skill or clumsiness. This fact has been represented rather crudely by the statement that a man causes what happens to himself, but the fact is that his work is his world, his environment is the expression of his character.[Page 176]

Though all work is individual it is not all done separately. There is much in which men act together or in the same way, so that as there is similar and common action there is also a common and similar world. As much as our bodies are alike our minds are alike and our worlds are alike. We are in a world which is common to all of us, and we share the same sky, the same ocean and sometimes the same omnibus. When, for example, we

acquiesce in bad laws or customs, there is our stroke on the canvas, along with many others.

All these pictures, and the great picture of which each is a part (though the great picture is chaotic to the extent to which the separate painters are acting without consideration for one another, without unity of life) represents our past. A motor-car of last year's model may still be an efficient vehicle. We may ride in it for pleasure or for other business, but as a vehicle it represents our lapsed intelligence, and sooner or later we shall revolt against this old car and declare its inadequacy, like a painter who looks at his picture of yesterday and says; "This is not good enough for me; I ought to be able to do better than that."

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Individual and social life and thought are full of last year's models — instruments, books, clothing, houses, customs, manners, emotions and even ideas — and the only thing that can convert them into new models is life itself. Thought, love, will — these enlarge and renew the world of our personal experience and power, because they are life. And because life is never lacking, because man is never entirely sleeping or dead, we all have at least some discontent with the things of the world as they are. At last nothing but completeness, the fullness of life, will satisfy. We are most awake, most living, when we recognize our environment as consisting not of mere things, but of the expressions of our own past, that is to say of our own incompleteness. When we realize them to be the exterioration of our own inadequacy the wheels of life — of thought, love and will — begin to turn. This is creative life. It is also character.

Studying the course of an incarnation we have seen that it is undertaken for experience, "The world exists for the education of each man," We must not be misled by the word experience, so as to imagine that it is giving us something from the outside. All through the ages men have worked at the building of [Page 178] palaces and temples; Nature has kindly reduced these to dust, but there remains permanently in the men who built them the development of character or life resulting from their efforts to express themselves. As the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* says, all works result in wisdom.

It is always the life that is the positive principle. So experience results in the awakening of parts or degrees of our life which were dormant before. Thus character, or what makes a mark upon circumstances, grows. A man who wills, or loves, or thinks, does not take his color from his circumstances, like a block of glass, which looks green or red when it is placed on sheets of paper of those colors. He is positive, is alive, has character. So by the end of a human life cycle the character resulting from the work has been formed, and the man is ready to face his old picture, to which he has grown superior while making it, and is ready to use his new powers for altering it or painting it anew. The important point

to grasp, on account of its bearing on the practical policy of our lives, is that throughout all the changes in the course of the cycle the life is the positive thing, and it grows only by unfolding from within.

This positive use of circumstances was put [Page 179] in another way by Emerson when he gave his interpretation of the Beotian Sphinx, as follows: “Near and proper to us is that old fable of the Sphinx, who was said to sit in the road-side and put riddles to every passenger. If the man could not answer, she swallowed him alive. What is our life but an endless flight of winged facts or events ? In splendid variety these changes come, all putting questions to the human spirit. Those men who cannot answer by superior wisdom these facts or questions of time, serve them. Facts encumber them, tyrannize over them, and make the men of routine, the men of *sense*, in whom a literal obedience to facts has extinguished every spark of that light by which man is truly man. But if the man is true to his better instincts or sentiments, and refuses the domination of facts, as one that comes of a higher race, remains fast by the soul and sees the principle, then the facts fall aptly and supply into their places: they know their master, and the meanest of them glorifies him.”

The need for karma or circumstances as a means to the attainment of any particular evolution of consciousness becomes less as a man evolves. The more evolved or awakened life can find great significance in things which [Page 180] seem to the less evolved small and insignificant. One needs a range of mighty mountains or the vast ocean to inspire him with visions of great beauty and power, where another can obtain the same from a tiny flower or a grain of sand. Many a time when there has been a house on fire some man who never before showed any signs of courage has rushed into danger to save a child or even the family cat. People have then said that “he rose to the occasion”. Good, but he who rises to the occasion without the occasion, if I may so put it, rises above circumstances. Then he really lives with purpose, as a positive character.

Strictly, circumstances are necessary because we have failed to will, to love or to think. A new incarnation, with the karma which it contains, represents the extent of our failure in the last incarnation, and thus expresses to us the inadequacy of our past willing, thinking and loving. In this way the whole world is in league with our secret souls, to help them to their flowering and completion. For every “mistake” leads to experience which awakens some part of our nature, and so removes the possibility of that mistake for the future. The world punishes idleness, selfishness and thoughtlessness, [Page 181] with pain, which should be to us the sign of our own inadequacy. In this incarnation I may meet the mistakes of the last, and if through experience I rise superior to those mistakes I shall not need the same lessons again.

If we understand karma in this way we can no longer regard it as a punishment or a hindrance. We shall not wait for the clouds to roll by, as though karma were something purely external to ourselves, but we shall face every bit of it with character and with rejoicing, delighting in altering the picture of the past. Such a joyous spirit removes the drudgery from work, fills our efforts with delight and makes them true play. Karma, properly understood in terms of life, that is, really theosophically understood, should be a source of perennial joy.

I must perhaps give some common instance of the way in which character is built from karma. Suppose I waylaid a man, knocked him down and robbed him. That piece of work would represent my deficiency of character, my lack of universal life, along the lines of sympathy and love; my violence would be the expression of my crudeness, my insensitiveness. This violence would appear [Page 182] in the circumstance of my future life. In my own experience I should be brought face to face with my misdeed. The violence to which I would then be subjected would tend to awaken in men, or rather to cause me to awaken in myself, the sensitiveness in which I had been deficient before, so that on the next occasion on which I was about to knock a man down I should pause and say to myself: "It is not a very pleasant thing for the poor fellow". Karma would continue its operation on those lines until that action became impossible for me, because I should have evolved sympathy, or love, which must be mine if I have the consciousness of the other man's life.

At the end of a given incarnation, then, a man has done two things; he has responded with certain feelings and ideas to the circumstances presented to him in that incarnation, and he has expressed himself or worked according to his present character. If he has acted without thought and love; if he has loved without thought and action; if he has thought without love and action; or if he has acted and thought without love, or loved and thought without action, or acted and loved without thought, he will have produced painful condition for somebody. They will be due to [Page 183] the inadequacy of his character. These mistakes will await him as his karma; they will exactly suit his character or deficiencies, and will be the means to his filling up the gaps in his character.

Life is like a game to be won. You may go on trying again and again, playing one game after another, each from the beginning. Some day you will win a game of life (that is you will make no failures in will, love or thought) and then no further incarnation will be necessary, because you will now have those faculties at your full command. You are no longer learning to develop them. You are free from the bondage of circumstances or the necessity of going to school. It is not expected that the man shall be ideally perfect to

attain this freedom, just as it is not expected that the body will develop innumerable arms, legs and other organs. But it is expected that he shall have his spiritual or life powers about him always, just as a serviceable body would have its regulation number of fingers, teeth and other parts, functioning in good order.

Therefore karma is a liberator, insomuch as it forcibly or emphatically places before each man the picture with which he is dissatisfied. It helps him to define his goal, or [Page 184] to come nearer in each incarnation to a conception of full and adequate life. It is not easy for most people to think with great clearness. They give birth vaguely to a small thought, and then see it clearly by acting it out on the stage of experience. But later, when they have grown stronger in thought, they will be able to make much even of a slight experience; the mental life will become clear and full. There will be understanding of life. But through all the process it is the life itself that expands and grows; no addition can be made to it from the outside; karma at every point only provides the tuition which intuition or the power of the man's own direct thought fails to give.

One striking piece of karma is the formation of the body. When certain activities have been established for constant use, the function lapses but the form remains as an organ. Therefore the body is "lapsed intelligence". This does not mean that intelligence is not going on, but with respect to that particular activity it is not. The knees bend one way. We have quite settled that matter, although in the amoeba they may be said to bend in any way. The body is the result of the lapsing of will, love and thought in certain [Page 185] matters. We carry our houses about with us as truly as does any crustacean.

Similarly, the mind is lapsed intelligence in the form of knowledge, or settled habits of thought (ideas), and feelings or emotions (affections). It is not difficult to trace out the formation and development of mind, from childhood onwards. True knowledge and false are here jumbled together in a conglomerate of which the basis is mental inertia. When we have settled upon an idea or, as we call it, attained a belief, we cease thinking anew upon it, even though we may use it in more elaborate schemes of thought, as, for example, when we use the theory of equations for the binomial theorem, and later the binomial theorem for the calculus. It then becomes a knee-joint in the mind.

We could regard body and mind as two bundles of prejudices — good and bad, or true and untrue — one as to activity, the other as to knowledge. Then, in practical life, the important matter is not to *live in* our prejudices, for that would be a living death. We must live not *in* our vehicles but *through* them. They must be mere tools in our hands — with serious limitations, of course, but still tools. 'There is no objection to this. Even Buddha's



[Page 186] knees bent only one way; but he was sensible enough to use those knees to make his peregrinations in the valley of the Gagnes.

Such living forms are *natural*, by which I mean that they are nothing but a portion, a limitation or incomplete expression of the reality of the life itself. That is behind the idea of archetypes of natural forms, which are *sui generis*, and not to be questioned. Life essays a certain activity in relation to its environment, and that form naturally results. The horse strives to run well — hence its legs. The grasshopper jumps — hence *its* legs. Of course, we may trace the running and jumping to the instinct of self-preservation in a given environment. There is, however, not mere self-preservation, but the instinct of self-expansion.

The function produces the form, not the reverse. No status will come to life. No Frankenstein's monster will acquire an independent will, and haunt its originator. Though thought-power can mould forms, it cannot give them function. Beauty acquired for appearances, and morality through copy-book maxims, are only skin deep. Not so the living laws of the Self — *thought, love and will* — which can make of every form a window into the infinite, [Page 187] and transform a dung-heap into a garden of delightful flowers.

To teach a child to walk we need not tell it all about the joints, muscles, tendons, nerves, etc. of its legs. Why trouble it with that lapsed intelligence? If the life does what it really wants to do, the form can take care of itself. If not, we shall begin again, like a person who rewrites an essay. How stupid he who will not write at all for fear of using up his paper and pencil!

In India a great distinction is made between *Râja Yoga and Hatha Yoga*. In the former the will governs the mind, and through that all the vehicles. It decides when and in what way emotions and ideas shall be active. In the latter you work first upon the body. By concentrating on certain bodily activities and on certain organs you try to enhance the life. The latter, if I may say so is a superstition which has grown up and displaced the former here and there. Concentrate on the pituitary body and the pineal gland? Yes, but be careful; you may cause them to swell, and produce — disease. But concentrate and meditate in perfect calm, contemplate some thought worth while, and the organ will quickly form itself, so that even [Page 187] that high thought can become a part of your “lapsed intelligence”.

It is a sad thing to build into our personality any “lapsed unintelligence”, which shows itself as disease of body or mind. Persistent neglect of our own reason, love interest, or individual purpose can always produce this. External working upon our own vehicles is a very radical way of denying the power of life itself in the government of form. The desire for it implies past error and present sleepiness, otherwise will, love and thought would fill the day with their eager life,

I can illustrate this, though a little crudely; by a reference to Monsieur Coué's famous formula: “Every day in every way I am getting better and better”. He told his people to say this very quickly, so as to leave no time for thought between the end of one utterance and the beginning of the next. Otherwise the man could not stop himself from saying: “I am getting better and better — I wonder if I am — I am getting better and better — I wonder if I am”, and so on. And if you were to think, for example, of the heart, you simply *must not picture* your heart as functioning well. If you did, your imperfect knowledge of it would cause your thought-power to do more harm than [Page 189] good. Let the life be intent upon health — that is all. And even that is a poor idea, for if the life is true to itself there will be no disease. Even for curing, external methods are not *fundamentally* good.

One great difference between the natural and the artificial form is that you need not know how the former works. But in a motorcar you must know the works, and put them right now and then, so that it will go, for running it will not perfect the machine.

How, then, can there be channels or forms made from the outside for the *life* ? Make a chair. It will not follow you about like a dog, waiting to be sat upon. Produce a family of growing children. You will soon find out whether they are willing to be channels for your superior life. They have their own life. An iron pipe will conduct water if you arrange for the water to flow in. But life ? Life is not even thoughts, but thought, not even emotions, but love, not even will, but being. Another may put an idea before me, but my thinking makes it mine, or rather by my thinking I expand to include it — I “understand” it. Forces on every plane are the common factors of our collective manifestation. All *karma*, all creation, is negative. [Page 190]

## CHAPTER 16

### THE EGO

THERE is great danger of misunderstanding in the expression “the ego”. While there is a use in technical terms there is also a danger. A familiar example of this is the word “heredity”. In answer to the question why children resemble their parents, people often say: “ Because of heredity, of course !” And then, when asked what heredity is, they reply: “The fact that children resemble their parents.” Thus a *word* passes for knowledge, and the questioning mind is silenced. What do words matter, when we want to find out how children come to resemble their parents, to make a science of heredity? Thus terminology degenerates into jargon.

The danger in the expression “the ego” lies in the effect of the little word *the*. Ego has the force of “I am”, which is a subjective statement, but as soon as we use the expression “*the* ego”, we have given it an objective flavor and have materialized what is in itself [Page 191] life. In nine cases out of ten the enquirer who is told about the ego is thereby *debarred* from a knowledge of the life which he is. The unfortunate person begins to think of a kind of balloon on higher planes which is somehow attached to him. If he calls it an aura, he thinks that aura has a skin, like a bladder of lard, But the ego is to be known only by the experience “I am.” It is the positive life that we are, at any time, on any plane.

Everyone knows Descartes' famous saying; “ I think, therefore I am”. We might equally say, “I love, or I will, therefore I am”. But it would be still more in consonance with our conscious experience to say: “I am, therefore I think, I love, I will.” Thinking, loving and willing are the activities of the life that we are, and these express themselves in our work of all kinds in daily life. It is dangerous even to say: “ I am the life.” It is safer to say “I live”.

This living of ours is fundamental, and produces all the forms and experiences round us. Thinking, loving and willing are powers; they are positive. Those powers flicker like candle flames in a draught while they are in course of evolution and not yet fully strong. Then we have present thinking obscured by past ideas (which should have become [Page 192] inadequate), present loving stifled by past attachments, and present willing destroyed by the worship of external things. When men worship or fear external things their own will is gone, and they forget that all things without exception are for our use — the material things for our thinking and understanding, the living beings for our loving and understanding. To wish that something might be different is to abrogate our will, which should be employed always with those things which are in our power. To wish is ignorance and it results in waiting. To will is knowledge of the life that we are. To want is vision of the fuller life.

The powers of life are all-unifying. Great thought is understanding; it stands under and holds, as it were, many facts at once, and sees their relationships or sees them as one whole. Every idea is single, though it may be as big as the world and contain everything in the world, and it corresponds to a single fact, though there may be great diversity within the unity of that fact. At bottom the whole universe expresses one single idea. Great love also is understanding, but it is the understanding of life instead of material things, so that love is but the manifestation of the perception. [Page 193] of the unity of all lives. And willing also is unifying, for it co-ordinates all the expressions of our individual life.

The ego is the one idea for the body. It has made fingers and toes and all other organs in course of time, and these are unified under one dominion. I have expressed the matter badly. I should say, not that the ego is the one idea and that the ego has done this, but that I am the miller, the lover and the thinker, and my unity must appear in this which is my work. When I have mastered my environment it will be as organic as my body.

Personality is my expression at any given time, not only in the body and its habitual ideas and habitual feelings, but in dress, manners, residence and its furnishings, business, etc. Personality is expression. If a man digs in the garden with a spade, there is personality, If he writes in his library with a fountain pen, there is personality. But if the man's life is so clotted with ignorance that he cannot put down the spade and take up the pen, or put down the pen and take up the spade, you have what has been called "self-personality", which is only in degree removed from the condition of the insane, who think themselves to be teapots, north poles and [Page 194] Queen Elizabeths. Fear and pride produce self-personality. A man must have a pose, a manner, a calling, a name, a title, in order to be comfortable in society, to have a place, an identity, a self in the social order, and to this he clings at all times in public pose and even in private thought, because there is little thought, love and will in him, and this absurd fear and pride, or timidity and conceit, will not let them grow.

Seated in such self-made prisons, men nevertheless do sometimes have a gleam of real life, and then they say: "The ego has come down". One friend used to amuse me occasionally, though quite unintentionally, when, in the course of conversation, he would say, putting his finger to his head: "Wait a moment, while I consult my higher self". There was, of course, something in it; he was obtaining a slight ray of light, but it is better to stand in the sunshine. Whenever I think or love or will, I am; that is the ego. Whenever we rise superior to circumstances, using them, this is the case. This does not refer only to great occasions; any thought, any love, any willing is egoic.

“The ego” is commonly considered to have a great quantity of stored magnificence, [Page 195] accumulated through many lives. Unquestionably, at any given time, I am greater than my expression. If I am a carpenter I can turn over in my mind in the morning all the possible things that I may make. I can think of chairs, tables, bookcases, wardrobes, etc. I may decide to engage myself in the making of a stool. I shall then be occupied with that, and I hope I shall be trying to make my stool better than any stool I have made before. In my memory and in my subconscious mind are all the ideas of other things that I may have made or may think of making. But fundamentally my desire is to learn, that is, to expand my powers, and therefore I shall engage myself with the stool.

It is not the business of my life to entertain myself by repeating perpetually the things which I have already learnt to do. We are not here to express ourselves in that sense. We are at school, and therefore life is a thing of phases for us. The picture which we have painted in the past is spread out like one of those old-fashioned panoramic views of pre-cinematographic days, in which the picture gradually rolled off one roller on to another. Thus we have phases such as childhood, youth, maturity, etc, each having its own talents [Page 196] or virtues, and its own obscurations or weaknesses.

The giving of attention to one thing at a time is concentration, an expression of will, which in its perfection would be the attention of the whole given to a part of itself. It is the will that divides the mind into the conscious and subconscious, and constantly in a different place.

It cannot be said that “the ego” resides on a particular material plane. At all times he is doing the same thing on all planes, but when the higher planes, as they are called, are invested in imagination with the characteristics of the physical plane, an artificial and unnatural quality is at once given to them. The physical plane has great clarity, solidity, because it is the expression in work or karma of our greatest concentration. When we have so perfected the power of our thought and love that we do not need this narrowness or concentration to give that clearness or substantiality, then the planes of the ego, as they are called, will have this character of reality. To put it in another way, the carpenter will be able to make *all* his chairs, tables, etc., at once. Such an attainment will mean that the process of schooling has come to an end [Page 197] because the powers of the ego have reached their full strength. The ego will then be free, without the necessity for the concentration process which we sometimes call the physical plane, fancying that it is something in itself, instead of a mere expression of life.

The “I am” of which I have been writing, which is three-in-one in its expression, has long been indicated by the use of the three Sanskrit words *âtmâ*, *buddhi* and *manas*, often translated as the spiritual will, intuitional love and active intelligence. Each of these powers is again dual; for example, perception and observation are the more receptive aspects of thought, while judgment and planning are the more positive, and similarly sympathy and goodwill are the receptive and active forms of love. Each of the three is a form of cognition; by *manas* we get to know things, by *buddhi* we get to know lives, by *âtmâ* (a confusion of terms — strictly *ahankâra*, “I-making”) we get to know the one life. Then our expressions along these lines are respectively thinking, loving and willing. *Atmâ*, *buddhi* and *manas* are not objects sitting on high planes, like the deities in an upper corner of an Egyptian papyrus.

Even in a particular incarnation nothing [Page 198] essential is lost; there is what has been called conditional immortality. In one of the *Mahâtmâ*, letters to Mr. Sinnett it was said: “The personality hardly survives.” But what does survive is immortal, because it is ego. Only in so far as personality expresses life can personality survive. Really there is no survival about the matter; it is life which never dies, which cannot die. We may put it that at the end of an incarnation, when experience becomes character, the additional character is the unfoldment of “the ego” as the result of that incarnation. So true personality is the new part of “the ego” that is being evolved. To put it crudely, the pure part of the personality has become one with “the ego”, has obtained immortality, and therefore the condition of the personality's immortality is its purity from the egoic point of view. That does not then in particular reincarnate. Therefore those who do not believe in reincarnation have some truth on their side or in their argument, as well as those who do. “The ego” once more starts on a new concentration, which makes an entirely new personality. So “the ego” reincarnates, but the personality does not. [Page 199]

## CHAPTER 17

### PROGRESS AND INITIATION

THERE is no such thing as material evolution or progress. Certainly there is a succession of forms, and the later are very often more complicated organisms than the earlier; but it cannot be said that the earlier has evolved into the later form.

The definition of evolution, so excellently given by Herbert Spencer, clearly shows the characteristic effect of life working upon matter. He said that evolution is a progressive change from a state of incoherent homogeneity to a state of coherent heterogeneity of structure and function. Let me give illustrations to explain these terms. Incoherent homogeneity may be represented by a quantity of pins, all of the same size, thrown

loosely upon a tray; they are homogeneous because they are alike, and they are incoherent because they do not combine. Incoherent heterogeneity might be represented by a workshop in which all the various parts of a motor-car are lying [Page 200] about on the floor, on shelves and on tables; there is heterogeneity because the parts are all different from one another, and there is still incoherence. Coherent heterogeneity is shown when all those parts are fully assembled and the motor-car is there. And when the motorcar is running you have coherent heterogeneity in both structure and function. The motor-car is an expression of life; so is the human body; so is a piece of music; so is a house. And the greater the life that is expressing itself the greater will be the heterogeneity, and the greater the coherence.

The same thing happens in human minds. The man who understands is he whose knowledge is greatly heterogeneous, but at the same time coherent. "Variety in unity" seems to be the motto of life, The body is one because it is the expression of one life, one power; one great; hand stretches out and grasps a handful of the world, and instantly it shows the unity.

Thus when a man comes into incarnation, as the expression is, he gathers in his net a quantity of things which then express him or constitute his personality. The tiny child is busy gathering; he finds out what he can do and what he cannot do; he listens to what people say about him, and so he forms opinions, [Page 201] develops habitual emotions, and sets up bodily habits and poses, so that from the standpoint of common opinion by the age of about twenty-one there is a fully formed personality. It cannot be said that this is a reincarnation of a previous personality. The successive personalities are like successive roses on a bush, or like successive pictures painted by an artist.

If the personality is really an instrument, like a spade in the hand of a gardener or a pencil in the hand of a painter, the power of the life will soon manifest itself by producing coherent heterogeneity in the environment as well. This is the true sign of progress, that one's environment does not remain unorganized and one's life-story a succession of casual and unrelated incidents, but the power of the life sweeps everything into one stream, one purpose, one idea. Life is simple because it is coherent. The expression is like a train of camels, which can be led by one man.

There is no material evolution, or influence of the past upon the present and the present upon the future. The process is more like that of a cinematographic picture in which there is a black space thrown upon the screen between one picture and the next.

A personality is not the reincarnation of a [Page 202] previous personality, but it is a new effort on the part of the ego to paint a more perfect picture than before, or, to take another simile, to play a game of chess and to win. If there is any power outside us, it is to be regarded like an opponent in a game of chess rather than as some one guiding the painter's hand while he paints his picture, The champion chess player of a certain country told me regretfully that he could not improve his game because he could not find better players against whom he might contend. In the game of our personal life there is not this disability. God, playing on the other side of the board, gets us down every time. But every game that is well played makes us stronger and is therefore a success, even though it may be lost, so I look forward to the day when I shall win my game, and show this God that I am just as good as he. What I am trying to say is that progress is not to be measured by success, triumph, pleasure and other such things. Those may be the rewards and desires of the life that is nearly asleep, that needs to be stirred into activity by the vibrations that pleasantly excite the body, the emotions and the mind. But he who knows the thrill of thinking, loving and willing, of the great unifying powers of life [Page 203] itself, is suspicious of success, for it seems to indicate that he has not aimed as high as he might have done.

In each game it is character or power that counts, not memory. This is sufficient explanation of the puzzle why we do not remember our past lives. A life governed by the recollection of previous experiences would always be dependent — indeed the conception is a paradox. But a life full of living power knows what to do, and violates no law of love, thought or decision. Ten commandments have proved a poor guide to humanity; ten million commandments even could not advise us for all occasions. But three simple spiritual laws — never to fail in will, love and thought — govern every possibility of expression or experience.

Because it is character that matters, the unfoldment of life, all evolution is from within. Every man must use his own conscience, and there cannot possibly be such a thing as was suggested by a certain Archbishop — “the conscience of a fool.” The fool is he who tries to guide his life by the conscience of another; he is as foolish as one who would ask another to eat his breakfast for him or to learn Greek for him, Each of us is what he is. He has [Page 204] evolved to a certain point, and if he would go further he must start from that point, making use of all persons and things in his own plan.

Initiation means starting, and in this case it means to establish ourselves firmly in the life of “the ego”. The first stage is to recognize spiritual laws, or laws of the life, as above material laws, or the dominion of forms. All this has been put very well in the *Bhagavad-*



*Gîtâ*, which describes three kinds of men in the world. First comes the sluggish man, who eats and sleeps; second, the aggressive, who is full of personal desires and ambitions. The first suffers from indolence, the second from greed. In very modern psychological terms, the first is the slave, the second the careerist. Thirdly comes the thoughtful man, who observes and considers the laws of nature and of health, and lives according to those laws. But Shrî Krishna, the teacher, told Arjuna, the pupil, to rise above all these three conditions and establish himself in a deeper understanding — in other words, to have the intuitional thought, which is the perception of the ever-present life which we are, and therefore to follow the egoic or spiritual laws primarily, to have egoic motives and purposes. [Page 205]

The application of the word initiation to any state, or rather states, is often somewhat arbitrary. In theosophical circles what has been called the first great initiation applies to the further awakening at which the man realizes himself not merely as the life, but as not different or separate in interests from the life expressing itself through other bodies. The true initiate recognizes *all* other living beings as other fingers on the same hand.

This recognition is the foundation of ethics. It is natural for us to love others, because we are not a different life and no one is sufficient unto himself. This initiation might be expressed in other terms by saying that when the thinking principle, *manas*, bows before the loving principle, *buddhi*, and says: “Henceforward I am your servant, and I shall work for you in the external world which is my sphere”, there is the beginning of a new and greater life. In all activities there is some thought, some love and some will, but in this joint stock company the principle of love has now become the chairman of the board of directors. Initiation is the beginning of the life of love — not love which is pumped up or flogged into activity or awakened by others, but love which naturally overflows the boundaries [Page 206] of personality, and associates with the life expressing itself through other forms.

It is not necessary that this attainment of what is sometimes called the *buddhic* consciousness should be marked by external events in the personality or in the planes of matter. When that is the case it resembles the conferring of a degree in a university. The candidate has to pass his own examinations, make his own attainments, and even then he can receive his degree *in absentia*. Or he may have been what is usually called a private student. Who can tell in how many different ways people achieve initiation, and in how many different ways they interpret that change of life, or realization of life, when they seek to invest the personality with a conception of its new obedience and dignity, as with cap and gown ?

In the letters to Mr Sinnett there is an occasional reference to initiated adepts and initiates. The initiate there described is he who has really begun his life. While “the-ego” is working with these personalities or incarnations one after another, however far he may have gone in the unfolding of his powers he is still a child at school, is still concentrating upon one thing at a time, and therefore is, [Page 207] not living a full and free life. But when a boy or a girl leaves school or college and goes forth into the world to mingle on an equal footing with the men and women of his time, he uses all his acquirements (history, music, mathematics and everything else) simultaneously, or rather just when they are needed in the business of that life. Then the true life really begins, for which all this painting of pictures was only a practice and a preparation.

No one can describe that expanded life in the terms of concentrated life, that full reality in terms of limited expression. Even the powers of the life in expression — thinking, loving and willing — cannot characterize that fullness or fulfilment of life. It is not even enough to say that it sees everywhere without eyes, hears everywhere without ears, works everywhere without hands, for those organs belong to the time-process or egoic expression. They are only the powers with which that time-process conquers the space-limitation of the material expression. Even the time-process is conquered by him who has found the whole.

“The dewdrop slips into the shining sea.” “The river has found the ocean.” Consider the drop and the ocean. What made the drop [Page 208] water — the watery substance of it, or the non-watery externals that kept it away from the other drops ? When we find our watery substance we shall not fear the “shining sea”. It is the same drop in the ocean as it was out of it. Think then of a world of life in which the very sands of the seashore and the grains of dust of the streets are glorious gods or buddhas, of whom the most material integument is a singing ecstasy of beauty and understanding, the “Dhyan-chohanic” world in which the least and lowest is free from the need of thought or love or will.[Page 209]

## **CHAPTER 18**

### **GURUS AND TEACHERS**

THE “goal of human life is perfection; not in the sense that we shall be able to manage or govern all things (which would merely constitute a great interference with other people’s experiments), nor that we should know all the facts and laws of Nature (for the so-called facts are only fleeting forms, and the so-called laws are only their general qualities or properties), but that we shall not be carried away by circumstances, but always act from our own true center. Such finding of the center of our own being, and action from that

center, imply that under any circumstances will, love and thought never fail, but rather they become free of effort — like the speech of a practiced orator, or the touch of an expert pianist — so that all eccentricity is at an end.

Various names have been used to indicate such a state — the Hindu philosophers call it *jivanmukti* or “freedom while living”, theosophists often speak of “the adept”, and think [Page 210] of human perfection as being characterized by considerable psychic power, such as clairvoyance and traveling in the subtle body, the prominence of this idea being due to the influence of modern materialism, which accepts the world as an important thing. Buddha spoke of the stages of the *arhat* (the man who is “ready” or “competent”), and the *asekha* (one who has no more to learn from the world), who is also *buddha* (wise or illuminated).

The perfect man is the man who has found his own true life, and does not need to make any more material forms or experiments, (reincarnations), but enters the world of life.

Picture, then, a world of life in which there is no matter (that is to say, no outside restriction) though there is all the reality and all the infinite variety which we think of in connection with the material world, but originated in the life. The world of life is more, not less, than the world of matter, for the world of matter is only a limitation of the world of life, or rather a concentration in it. So that, if we may use the simile, the very grains of sand on the shores of the ocean of life are awakened monads, glorious buddhas, What we call the world of matter is still there, but to these glorious beings it is part of the [Page 211] world of life, and presents no obstacles, any more than the school in a town presents an obstacle to the graduates who have left it. All space-forms and all time-forms are there, but they present no restrictions. This is the meaning of *nirvana*. Let me explain it in terms of planes, though that method is liable to be crude. The reality is here and now. The physical plane *is* the nirvanic plane, but with a screen or grating before it which shuts out almost all the reality.

As a grown-up person may enter the nursery, so may a liberated man mingle in personal form in the “material” world; but this is abnormal; they are liable to muddle the children. All liberated lives are one, and not separated from us, so that all beauty, truth and love in the world are from that high source. The Master is in the beauty of the rose.

When a liberated man speaks of the life he knows, he is called Master, Teacher, or *guru*. His object is not to interfere with any experiments, but to remind us of our true, free state. He cannot give life to the aspirant, who must grow by the exercise of his own powers. Since the *guru* is not an ordinary man, but is an awakened monad or free life, his appearance is only his instrument for a [Page 212] limited purpose, though he uses it freely. Therefore the being who is seen by the pupil, the beautiful man, with hair and eyes and *mein* about which a poetic pupil might rave, is not the Master himself, who wants men to come out of their world of forms into his world of true life. He tells us that full life is to be won by effort (of will, love and thought). He may exhibit a rare expression in human form of the creative powers of life, but so doing he *shows* merely the work, and not the life. He wants the pupil to find the life.

The message always is, "Come out of your world into ours" not "Call us, and we will come out of our world into yours". Since all our activities are the play of children, it would be rather ridiculous for liberated men to come out of their world into ours in order to improve our mud pies or to build better sand castles than ours all along the beach. Forms are the things men play with. Their life also is behind the scenes. It is the attitude towards the forms that is creative, and unfolds or awakens the power of the life.

The Master's world is the world of life. The flawless music of a Master's life is the expression of his mastery, but we cannot know the Master by his music. The limbs of a racehorse [Page 213] are beautiful; they have become so because the life trying to run in the form of that animal has produced an expression of itself. Another horse could not develop such limbs for itself merely by admiring the exquisite limbs of a racehorse, but only by developing the life in the desire to run. And if the other horse, went to the racehorse and said; "Please teach me, so that I may have beautiful legs like yours". the racer might well reply, "You had better forget the loveliness of legs, and put your whole heart into the desire and the effort to run well; beauty will come of itself, for it is only the expression of life".

Life unifies and co-ordinates wherever its touch falls: it is unity in diversity. Order opens our eyes to the vision of life, which is itself beauty. So Masters want no praise or personal devotion or obedience, except obedience to their never-failing advice that we seek to express the fullness of our life through our will, love and thought. As one of them wrote to Mr. Sinnott: "The fact is that to the last and supreme initiation every chela is left to his own devices and counsel. We have to fight our own battles, and the familiar adage "the Adept *becomes*, he is not *made* is true to the letter".

If one loves the guru first and the life [Page 214] afterwards, one misses the reality, for he in a human form, even in an egoic form, *is not an ideal*, but may easily be made into an illusion.

Each one of us is exactly what he is, and it is from that point that he must evolve, and only in freedom can this be. If the goal is freedom, then each step towards it must be a little freedom. Therefore, as a philosopher once wrote, all imitation is suicide. We have to do our work, even if it is the work of children. Sometimes when people ask why the Masters do not interfere when things go wrong, even when their names are dragged in, the answer is; because these are the entertainments and education of children. Conditions may often be trying for some of us; all the more reason for us to exercise understanding and love, all the more opportunity for the expression of our strength.

That is one reason why Masters do not show themselves more in personal form. Secondly, such showing is dangerous, and the chief danger is perhaps that of mistaken external devotion. Probably the next danger is that people, seeing the Masters, would make less effort, for two reasons — they would be discouraged by the sense of their own inferiority, and they would be satisfied without [Page 215] knowledge and achievement, saying, “The Masters know that everything is all right, so we need not worry. All is well with the world while they exist”. It is not well for mankind to come too near to genius and glory — even spiritual genius. He who speaks too well silences many. It is one of the disadvantages of the facility of modern travel that the genius imposes himself upon the world, and destroys the middle sort of talent; our pianist from Vienna or Poland makes music in the home ridiculous, and our printing presses have slain the village poets.

In one of the Mahâtmâ Letters to Mr. Sinnett, the writer said that they would never give satisfactory proof of their existence. If they did so, most people would cease to strive. It can only be given to those few who have already awakened themselves to such an extent, and have already had such a vision of the importance of the life in themselves and others, that nothing can check their efforts. To them the Master may be known as a man, as a wise and helpful friend, even as an instructor or teacher. But even in this the relationship has mostly an impersonal character, although the pupil may personalize his memory of such  
contacts.[Page 216]

If much personal intercourse were established and certain people were announced as authorised to act as mediums or mediators for them, that would soon set up a standard of our proper relation to the Masters' world, and then the Open Door would soon be forgotten or despised.

Inseparate from our life, though not mingling in our forms, they called and call us to that world of theirs, to which every human heart is a door. Those who “reject the Masters” are not they who do not wish to follow a particular and limited manifestation, but those whose conception of them is limited to their appearances “outside the precincts”. They tacitly reject their great power and presence, beating inwardly at all our hearts.

Another proof that the Open Door is the general policy of the Masters, and that external intercourse is abnormal for them, is that they are limited by the human body, and cannot through it associate with many persons. In the letters to Mr. Sinnett the Master stated that he was very busy, and sometimes had to keep his correspondent waiting for days for a reply. Also one of them wrote, “I care very little for objective intercourse”.

But just as externally we may add to our [Page 217] power by making machines which associate us with the forces of Nature, so internally we can enter the “mind-plane” of the Masters, and think their thoughts with them.

There is a collective or brotherhood principle in knowledge and ideas, as there is to a large extent in material things. If two people happen to have the same idea it is the same idea, not two ideas which are the same. A person who has so purified his life that it is not in a state of perpetual response to gross stimuli, and has so developed his understanding that he can grasp big ideas, is thereby more in tune than others are with the Masters. In connection with this principle, the Master K.H. wrote: “For a clearer comprehension of the extremely abstruse and at first incomprehensible theories of our occult doctrine, never allow the serenity of your mind to be disturbed during your hours of literary labors, nor before you set to work. It is upon the serene and placid surface of the unruffled mind that the visions gathered from the invisible find a representation in the visible world. Otherwise you would vainly seek those visions, those flashes of sudden light which have already helped to solve so many of the minor problems and which alone can bring the truth [Page 218] before the eye of the soul. It is with jealous care that we have to guard our mind-plane from all the averse influences which daily arise in our passage through earth-life.”

The thoughts of a Master might look very much like orders to those who are predisposed to regard them in that way, and who do not stop to reflect that understanding is not separate from the will, that clear knowledge impels action. An interesting instance of mind-plane contact with the Master was given by Dr. Besant. She remarked recently that her Master sent her into Indian politics in 1877. That was about twelve years before she had any belief in Masters. Retrospectively she recognized the relationship which existed

before she knew of it. There must be many more who have it, and do not directly know the fact.

It must not be assumed, of course, that Dr. Besant took the work up merely because told to do so; the heart and the will leaped forth in harmony with the idea. There can be no objection to the brotherhood of all life, as a source of our intuitions. If the intuition of our own will is not the spring of our action, the life is shut off or deadened down, and as our evolution is proportional to the amount of [Page 219] life in activity, orders from another are deadening. This puts contact with *Gurus* on a reasonable basis — each man must decide for himself what to do on all occasions, how to employ his time, where to give his sympathy, his money and his energy. If his decisions come out of the Masters' mind-plane they are still his own, though they contain fruits of divine friendship; and if they are from “governors of the world”, he is of the “governors”. Whether his mind is pure enough for that is entirely the matter of his own effort, but it must be remembered that health, not strength, of mind is required to see the meaning of life.

One cannot separate Master and pupil into two entities, one of whom is directing the other; that is why it used so often to be said that one's own higher self was the Master. I do not like the expression “higher self”, but it can certainly be said that anyone who can be his own higher self is thereby in contact with the Master. All true intuitions have to do with Masters, and conversely association with a Master in his appearance or body on any plane on the part of anyone who was not yet himself his own higher self would be no contact with the Master, because he would not understand the Master, but would be somewhat in the [Page 220] position of a cat or a dog in the Master's house.

There is only one way to associate with a Master as a Master, and that is from “within” by our own living power. I know a man who has been conscious of a Master (or thinks he has) for many years, who said that some time ago the Master had made himself specially clear as to visible form, and then reproached him, saying: “You must not make this distinction between us; what you do I do.” That Master had been a teacher to him. Their way of teaching is to help the pupil to grow into his subject, but this friend had wrongly fallen into the idea of regarding it as instruction from the outside.

As regards outside instruction, the world is not lacking in literature which tells how man may reach perfection. The records of Christ, Buddha, Shankara and others are with us, and the truth peeps out in a thousand other places. Some weak persons desire a teacher to tell them what is true, what they should believe and do. But their attitude is absurd for it

is only by facing their own problem that they can awaken themselves to fuller living,, and enter the Masters' world.

The *Gurus* are like the sun, We need not [Page 221] worship the sun or request it to shine more and more, but we need to make use of the sunshine. That is the greatest worship, In all this the example of children is an excellent guide, for they are not content to watch and admire their elders, but must at once start in and do for themselves that which has caught their imagination. They have not the psychology of a crowd which watches a football match or reads novels as a substitute for life. The orthodox *Guru* is too external a thing, like the orthodox God. [Page 222]

## CHAPTER 19

### RELIGION

IN the material world there is a supreme superior, something that differs entirely from every thing, and yet of it all things are parts. One thing is dependent on another, but there is something upon which all are at last dependent. A table stands upon the floor. It is dependent upon that support for its position in space. The floor in its turn rests upon beams, and those upon walls, and those upon the foundations of the building and the earth. It is a commonplace of modern science that the earth also is where it is in space because of the various forces which connect it with the sun, and the sun in its turn leans upon other celestial bodies. Ultimately it is only the entirety of things which is *self-sustaining*. This shows us that somehow all the parts depend upon the whole — the world is not made up of a great quantity of particulars which are somehow independent and have merely come together by chance or caprice. It is one thing [Page 223] and that unity is the foundation and support of all the parts.

In human consciousness we find a similar truth. The body acts as an organized unit because there is an “ I” or a will in that body. After death all the parts of the body go their respective ways, and there is decay and dissolution, but while there is life there is unity. Many years ago Professor Thomas Huxley spoke of this, though in a slightly different connection. He told his audience that though it might appear to them that while lecturing he was exhibiting a good deal of life, what they were witnessing was a process of dying, because with every word that he uttered he was wearing away the cells of his body. Then, in his always humorous way, he begged them not to be alarmed, for he would not permit the process to go too far, but would go home, have recourse to the substance called mutton, and stretch his protoplasm back to its original size, The point is that Professor Huxley would take steps to repair his body because he himself was a life governing that body.



If we study ourselves psychologically, we find there is something coordinating all; and that even our thoughts and feelings come under that. The will might be defined as that faculty [Page 224] by which we govern our own thoughts and feelings. In itself it seems to be the principle of unity and order. We have thus seen that whatever power it is which is the support of all material things, it is of exactly the same nature as that which we find in ourselves as the will.

Therefore many religious philosophers have declared that because there is one world and one law from which nothing can escape, there must be one first cause which is the source of all. That supreme source of all also shows itself in man in the principle of order, so that men know "God" by expressing more and more of that ultimate reality in themselves.

The word religion is connected with other familiar words, such as ligament, or ligature, something that holds or binds, and it may therefore be taken that religion consists of any means which may be used to bind a man into that service, to make him true to his best and inmost self. Such a man will try to understand experience, and such understanding shows the principle of unity, because taking into account many things at once and seeing them as parts of one system is understanding. Such a man will also express the principle of love, which also unites, shows interest beyond the limits of [Page 225] one personality, and binds many together in one united group.

It is impossible to think of God as any particular form, however big. Only the whole can represent to us that self-dependence. But somehow that whole is reflected in each one of us, and we find it as the will or principle of unity. Some dictionaries tell us that theosophy is an intimate knowledge of divine things. That does not mean a special knowledge, attainable by the development of some peculiar and unusual faculty, but simply recognition of this principle of unity in us, which is the will and the life. Because he was a theosophist, Jacob Boehme could say, " In some sense, love is greater than God".

The same idea is seen in the paradoxical argument about God's inability to create a man. It is said that there are some things which God could not do; he could not make a square circle or a tall dwarf, and similarly he could not make a dependent will. If there is any creation in this matter it is within, and we are he creating us. There can thus be no mediators between man and God, since they are not separate things, but the whole reflecting in the part.

Also there can be no outside authorities [Page 226] to tell a man what to do to increase or perfect this union. That process is best taking place when the man himself is developing his knowledge of the world through understanding, and his knowledge of life through love, in obedience to the principle of will in himself, which is always working for greater order or unity. If there is any outside authority, then everything is an authority, even a mosquito, because it causes us to resort to various methods of self-defense, and in thinking out those devices we are using and developing our intelligence and understanding. If there is an external God he is explicit, not implicit, in everything.

All religions, if carefully understood, show the same principle at the bottom. Christianity, for example, cannot be confined to the acts and things of which Christ spoke, but must include all in which He acquiesced. This is taken so in practice, for our modern civilization has inherited much from the thought and the beauty of Greece, and yet men call it a Christian civilization. The idea is perfectly consistent, and it is not difficult to trace the full movement.

In the early days of what is technically the white race we find that very much attention was given to abstract philosophic and [Page 227] religious thought. Those thinkers were discovering that there is a "soul" working through the body, much as a child gradually learns the same thing and in consequence acquires when grown up a sense of responsibility and purpose, instead of continuing life as a succession of casual adventures and incidents. The child very gradually finds the unitary or organizing principle, and the man applies it. The race does exactly the same thing on a larger scale. By the time that the early Greek philosophers had thus made the perception of the "soul" quite clear the season was ripe for the expression of that "soul" in action, and we find men beginning to turn its powers consciously and deliberately to creative art and the management of external things. Beauty is the expression of that order in work, and it spread from Greece not only westwards but also eastwards into the Hindu and Buddhist worlds.

Philosophers found that human life is ordered because there is one life working through the body, and when they began to observe that the world was also an ordered whole, they asked themselves whether there was not a similar principle governing and uniting all things. In the world they found, [Page 228] according to their predilections, the expression of the different faculties of the soul or life. Thus we have an Anaxagoras, putting the relations of things down to the workings of divine or universal *nous* or reason. If man's life becomes orderly through reason which he exercises, the same, it could be argued, must be true of the world. Empedocles ascribed the relations of material bodies to principles of love and hate, that is to say, to universal feelings. But Pythagoras seems to

have seen most deeply, for he said that in human life both reason and emotion are but subordinate and assistant to a principle of order, number or unity.

Out of those Greek times there has come down to us the practical religion of truth, goodness, and beauty. Truth is thought governed by unity; goodness or love is feeling governed by unity, and beauty is the result of work, which is action governed by unity — for all great skill in action produces beauty both in the object that is made and in the limb or organ with which it is made. Truth, goodness and beauty are living religion, because, they are the reflection of the one life or order, in each of our lives.

The Greeks were not so successful in [Page 229] manifesting goodness as they were in expressing truth and beauty, and I think we might ascribe to the fact that the Greeks could not hold together, and love one another, the necessity for Christ's special emphasis upon goodness. Certainly he did not object to truth and beauty, and they are therefore part of his religion, but it was necessary to strengthen especially the weak link in the chain.

Thus religion is thus not a special set of activities, different from ordinary life. It is that life properly lived.

The world of our experience cannot be left out of consideration; it is not a senseless, cruel place; the God in us is stamping its nature upon it, bringing it into order and developing our own powers in the process.

Life properly lived is life with a great goal in view, life lived with understanding of the principle of unity. Every thought, feeling and action should take place in the light of that purpose, and then it will make the most or fullest use of every moment and occasion. When a man is using his own intelligence, his own best feelings, or love, and his own will, he is doing his best, because his faculties will then grow. There is no need to fear mistakes if we are using our best thought, love and will, [Page 230] But there is great reason to fear fear itself, which postpones life. The man who never made a mistake, it is said, never made anything at all. It is reasonable to listen to advice, and to follow it if one's own judgment pronounces it the best thing, but merely to follow the direction of another because he or she is supposed to be superior in judgment, is to stifle our own life and prevent its growth. Men cannot be uplifted from the outside. The common soldier may be well drilled, but the result is he is unintelligent and lacking in initiative. We may paint

many pictures for a friend, but that will not make him into an artist, even if he holds the pencils and we guide his hand by holding it with ours.

The average man is living in the stream of things. He is attracted and repelled. He does not know himself. His personality is a piece of music bound together only by a repeating motive. He is a commuter, so that even when he travels he takes with him that criterion which will prevent him from being lost in the varied flow of new experience; just as an old lady travels with her parrot, and when she wakes up in the morning and sees her parrot she remembers who she is. Sooner or later comes to him a message “Be a man !” This [Page 231] was the Buddha's message and also the Christ's. The Buddha's was philosophical or metaphysical; he directed the people *away* from the events to the man. Find yourselves. He was talking to children. They were to become householders — the household being the body, into the life of which they were to bring coordination, or unity and power.

Most of the organized religions have failed badly. They have mistrusted both man and the world, and so have partially destroyed those very experiences and activities which make him more like God. In religious circles there are many “guiding lines”, and fixed ceremonials, and models for devotion and imitation. They play a great part in hiding the essential nature and the vitality of religion.

Errors go very far and very high. I have heard of people who love their fellow-men, but who could say about certain religious ideas, “ Yes, I know they are probably false, but they do good; they make people gentle and kind”. Such persons do not take into account the fact that truth, goodness and beauty cannot be separated — that the lack of any one of these places a shutter in front of the corresponding aspect of life. They are the foot-binders of the moral realm. [Page 232]

I do not know to what extent guiding lines help a child to write straight; I think on the whole that if he tried from the beginning without them he would be doing best. As it is many people seem to think that there is no correct writing except that which is between these ancient lines; they think that God is nearer to them in church and on Sundays than in the office, or the home, or the street on week days. It may be that people are so weak that they cannot remember to open their hearts and minds on all occasions, and must therefore have these special reminders or pick-me-ups; but I cannot see that they will have begun to be religious until they can bring some power from within themselves without the necessity for such stimulants.

It would be poor economy on the part of a being who wanted to give his best help or stimulus to mankind to arrange that it should flow only on certain occasions, and those attended often with great inconvenience and surrounded by great expense. In other words, divine “grace” presented only on special occasions, when special words are recited, when special clothes are worn, and through special persons, would be a disgrace. Indeed, many of the best minds have rejected the idea [Page 233] of God because it is sometimes surrounded by these appliances.

Most of us agree that collective human thought is powerful, and that it may be further supplemented with that of Masters and other beings. But at the same time it is logical to believe that the principle works everywhere, that all Nature is trans-substantiable, so that to go out into the forest or under the stars on a quiet night and feel the thrill of Nature's beauty, or to respond to the life in other human beings, is equally to excite the divine grace or flow of the forces of unity. Surely *all* true life is sacramental.

It has been a common mistake of religions to miss the goal or purpose of our existence. Many have held the vehicle theory instead of the instrument theory, and have in consequence obstructed the life in their adherents, instead of awakening it. Most of them have advocated supplication and hope instead of a courageous life. Most have taught consolation in the rewards and happiness of a future life, and have thereby denied the paramount utility of present experience. Most of them have preferred darkness to light, and would go into a cave with a candle to worship the sun. In the main they have ignorantly formulated [Page 234] external laws, and ultimately used them to counteract the best impulses of the human mind and heart, as for example when only a short time ago a priest of a narrow though large sect, when called upon to give evidence relating to excessive cruelty in a vivisection case, declared that though the cruelty was repugnant to human feelings, no one should set up human feelings against the divine law announced in the Bible, which fully authorized these things. Though the world punishes thoughtlessness, the religions have often encouraged blind belief, and have resisted the natural tendency in man to give ever fuller expression to the life within himself through the powers of will, love, and thought.

All such activities are contrary to the principle of theosophy, which is the antithesis of materialism, and declares that all things are divine because they belong to the life, and that true living alone can be religious or a cause of realization of unity or the one life. The theosophist is one who so fully realizes the omnipresence of the divine that he is willing to put his trust in all life. For him, God is out in the open and need not be sought in boxes, and all the world is a beautiful lawn across which all can walk without the need of a beaten path.[Page 235]

## CHAPTER 20

### ARE THERE TWO THEOSOPHIES ?

THEOSOPHY is a dignified old word, honored by seventeen centuries of consistent use. Yet, strange to say, today, and even in the Theosophical Society, the question is still raised: what *is* theosophy ? The Greek *theosophia*, from which our word is derived, is a compound, composed of *theos*. and *sophia*, which may be translated respectively God and wisdom. In practice, the term knowledge has generally been used, rather than wisdom, but this is not a point about which for our present purpose we need be punctilious.

The combination of *theos* and *sophia* can be read in two quite different ways, according as we take the first term to have the sense of a noun or that of an adjective. We thus find that theosophy means either “knowledge of the divine” or “divine knowledge”. There can be no question but that the former is the fundamental and historical meaning. It is [Page 236] also in entire agreement with the Sanskrit term *Brahma-vidyâ*, to which it has frequently been compared, for that means “ knowledge of Brahma ”.

Some of the dictionaries make its meaning “knowledge or wisdom *concerning* God or the divine”, but the weakness of this view lies in the fact that there is no knowledge with which the divine is not concerned. If that definition were true all theology would be theosophy, and all science also, since knowledge of astronomy or of crystallography improves a man's conception of deity. Similarly it cannot be taken as “an explication of God's ways or God's plan”, because there is nothing which is not his way or his plan; as stated in the *Gîtâ*, he is not only the splendor of splendid things, but also the gambling of the cheat.

The interpretation of theosophy as “divine wisdom” making it a collection of statements about the way in which the machinery of life works, including reincarnation, karma, etc, has come very much to the front during the last thirty years, because of the influence of fundamental and popular concepts of modern science, especially the wrong idea that there are natural laws and qualities of materials which belong to some substance which all the [Page 237] same has not in itself the creative power with which we are familiar by direct experience in ourselves. Science has shown that man and the mineral are “brothers”, or of one nature. From this a wrong inference has been drawn, namely, that man is only a more complex mineral. It should on the contrary be said that since man and the mineral are brothers, the mineral is a little man. We all know what man is.

It is an easy step from the definition of theosophy as “divine wisdom” to the wrong conception that theosophy is “a body of truths” which are in the special custody of groups of people who have a vision of higher planes of nature. I am not, of course, decrying such knowledge, but am simply pointing out that that is not what is meant by theosophy, but belongs to the same department of human activity as physics, chemistry, physiology and astronomy. I have had too much to do with occult researches not to know something of their value, but I would point out that we can regard superphysical research and information either theosophically or materialistically, just as we may make use of the physical sciences in either of those two ways.

Some of the dictionaries make it out that [Page 238] the knowledge of God which is understood as theosophy is obtained by shooting upwards, as it were, into some fine region and finding God there, and thus acquiring special “knowledge obtained by direct intercourse with God and superior spirits”. I may digress to the extent of remarking that as to such a view the famous Sir Henry More wrote in 1656: “This disease many of our chymists and several theosophists, in my judgment, seem very obnoxious to, who dictate their own conceits and fancies so magisterially and imperiously, as if they were indeed, authentic messengers from God Almighty”. This may be one of the diseases or superstitions which are liable to attach themselves to any theosophical movement, but obviously that is not knowledge of God or the divine, which is to be found just as much on the physical plane as on any other plane.

The danger arises when the materialistic idea creeps in. Then a *horizontal* dividing line is made, and what is above it is considered to be spiritual, while what is below is regarded as material. But the fact is that the dividing line should be drawn *vertically* through all planes, not horizontally at all, because the spirit or life exists everywhere in its own right [Page 239] and not on the sufferance of any forms. It makes the forms.

I can make this point clear by saying that on every plane or collection of expressions of a state of consciousness there are always both consciousness and form, and in all the cases of coherent form-building that we know there is evidence of the power of consciousness at work. Where there is life there is initiative in form-building, which at the same time is a display of the unification or integration of otherwise incoherent matter. In modern science we never meet mere energy or force as a form-builder. Gravity, for example, is a force *used* by the engineer, just as wood and stone are used by him. Similarly, a tree raises an immense amount of water. The tendency of natural energies is, on the contrary, towards dissipation in space, and the production of uniformity or homogeneity in matter,

The casual forms of clouds or of mountains are exhibiting decay or dissipation, not organization.

The main point of theosophy is that we regard our power as fundamental, and therefore to us small things and particular things are just as spiritual as big things. On one side of the vertical line there is the material, [Page 240] and on the other the divine. It is knowledge of this divine which is theosophy, and it is acting according to this divine which is the theosophic life in the world, and this may be achieved on any plane.

For the sake of illustration I will explain how a human being is more divine than a conger-eel. The conger-eel gives birth to about 150,000,000 young at a time. It might be argued that it must be superior to man, who generally gives birth to only one at a time. The young eels are perfectly good ones, but *they are nothing new*. They are just the same or almost the same as what have gone before. But the human being who tries to make improved conditions for even one child is really showing creative power far more than the conger-eel, that easily produces millions.

You can never judge progress by the quantity of work done, but *only* by the quality. Therefore a human being having a very small and humble position in the world, who puts into that position the new efforts which are involved in thought and love, is generally far more advanced than other persons who may be making a great success in the world. I may conclude this portion of my argument with the statement that while science deals with the [Page 241] form side only, theosophy takes into account *also* the life side of *every* plane.

I think we can better understand the relations between life and form on any plane by observing that the plane is not something existing on its own account, but is merely the effect of a mood of the former. In other words, a plane expresses a state of consciousness, and all the forms existing on that plane are nothing but expressions of consciousness acting in that state. So the fundamental thing about a plane is that it is essentially a state of consciousness. The collection of material forms is subordinate and secondary.

The forms by themselves mean nothing, just as the print on this page by itself means nothing. But since the forms made by consciousness in a certain state represent that consciousness (just as when a painter paints a picture he represents himself, or as our own calligraphy represent us individually), when the form is understood the state of



consciousness which produced it is realized, just as when the page of printing is understood the ideas which gave rise to it are realized. So-called facts are very evanescent, but the development of capacities, of consciousness is conterminous with time itself. Because theosophy [Page 242] studies the states of consciousness it is not empiric. Though it may be found that, let us say, affection produces a rosy color in the aura of a person on the astral plane, you cannot develop affection in an astral personality by painting him red with the colors from your astral palette. All the color equivalents of the emotions form merely a kind of astral phrenology, in which the success of the professor depends upon the accuracy of his color-sense, and education in color-variety.

Forms are utterly helpless. Words are only used to indicate experiences — they cannot *record* fact or life, which must be lived to be known. How Christ must have despaired of words when he said: “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice”. You can calculate on things, but not on human beings. Out of that incalculable comes invention. And out of invention comes new experience and new power to the consciousness. All this incalculable life is divine; therefore every individual is sacred. Edison may be the greatest of inventors, but he could not predict Marconi. No theosophist can treat another as if he were a mere form. [Page 243]

Nearly all those dictionaries which have tried to define theosophy as “knowledge of the divine” have made the mistake of regarding it as introspective, as interested in the life and *not* in the form, and have therefore considered the theosophic life as involving at least mental and emotional retirement or aloofness from the world. But this cannot be so, since all forms express life. Because they express it they are not mere forms. They are not finite things, to be abandoned as foreign to our nature and poisonous to us. On the contrary, the theosophic life consists in the finding of the infinite in the finite every time. For example, it cannot be my business to meet all the mothers in the world, and love them as mothers should be loved. I do not lose *anything* at all by not being able to meet all those mothers. The important point is that *if* in the course of my experience I have come to love my own mother, then I have the capacity to love all mothers whom I meet. In that case, I have found the infinite in the finite. There are no circumstances at all in which we cannot find the infinite in the finite, for thought, love or will applied to any experience soon reveals its divine value.

The special virtue of love in the matter is [Page 244] that it is a living recognition of the unity of life, and therefore adds the experience of others to our own. If I have no motor-car, but my friend has one, and I love my friend, that is just as good as if I have the motor-car. So love liberates me from personal limitations, not through indifference or renunciation, but through their very opposite. That is freedom. It is life.

The theosophic life stands for whatever promotes understanding, love and freedom. It is not subject to the blinding effects of materialism. It distinguishes very clearly between freedom and the exercise of power. I do not want to make or to control in any way the millions of forms with which other people are experimenting. I do not want to paint their pictures for them, while they sit for ever in swaddling-clothes. I have no desire whatever to give birth to 150,000,000 little conger-eels every season. If we have freedom, it is not because we can do everything, but because we do not want to do everything, but to be true to ourselves. That is why I particularly like a sentiment expressed in a letter from the Master M. to Frau Mary Gebhard in 1884. “ You have offered yourself for the Red Cross; but, sister, there are sicknesses and wounds of [Page 245] the soul that no surgeon's art can cure. Shall you help us to teach mankind that the soul-sick must heal themselves ? Your action will be your response”.

I hope I have been able to show that there are not two theosophies, but only one; that the term means, as I found it very well put in one dictionary, “an intimate knowledge of divine things”. Although some, translating it “the divine wisdom” have made it simply “a body of truths”, and of these some would go so far as to say exactly which truths are theosophy and which are not, they have missed the point. All that is simply Science, and it has its normal place in the study of that collection of impermanences which is popularly called the world. That is truth, in the sense of fact, while it lasts, but is not the same thing as that eternal truth which governs the relation of the life to these things, whatever they may be, and howsoever they may change their forms.

Each man is busy with his own karma and his own life. Science, whether ordinary or occult, is a study of the *karmas* or works or creations alone but, theosophy is a study of the lives which are being lived with the aid of those karmas. This is easy to understand if we do [Page 246] not start by taking it for granted that there is a world which exists in its own strength, and that we are small things which must somehow climb up to the tops of the mountain of that world. But if this popular supposition creeps in the whole argument will be spoiled.

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