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The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences and….

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The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy

METAPHYSICAL GARDENING

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Theosophy is a student journal and reflects a variety of minds. Its articles express a cornucopia of thought inspired primarily from a study of the writings of H.P. Blavatsky and William Q. Judge.

THEOSOPHY

is that ocean of knowledge

which spreads from shore to shore;

unfathomable in its deepest parts,

it gives the greatest minds their fullest scope,

yet shallow enough at its shore,

it will not overwhelm

the understanding of a child.

— *Wm. Q. Judge*

"THE CULTURE OF SOLIDARITY"

IT may be asked: What distinguishes the *so-called* "culture of solidarity" from the cultures we know? The dictionary definition explains that the term *Solidarity* refers to "A union or fellowship arising from common responsibilities and interests," or "An association of individuals with deep longings expressed through common goals." Appearances aside, there is a sense in which many current cultures represent various stages of solidarity in the making. Although most people remain largely unaware of its presence, the underlying *reality of unity* reflects and sustains the ideal of universal solidarity. The living brotherhoods that emerge within individuals and groups of individuals mirrors this eternal reality.

"The New Cycle," a feature article written by Madame Blavatsky for the inaugural issue of *La Revue Theosophique* for March 1889, reintroduces the ancient Theosophical Movement together with *modern* Theosophy. A fine overview defines the word Theosophy and advances a brief summary of what Theosophy (as Eternal Truth) means to serious inquirers. Then, H.P.B. lists the qualities that identify those most likely to be attracted to Theosophy:

> Whoever feels his heart beating in unison with the great heart of humanity, whoever feels his interests at one with those who are poorer and less fortunate than himself; whoever, man or woman, is ever ready to lend a helping hand to those who suffer, whoever is fully conscious of the real meaning of "Egoism," is a Theosophist by birth and by right.

This well-crafted sentence projects both the human sense of high purpose in the *First Object* of the Theosophical Movement and the undiminished stability ever-present in the *First Principle* of "Divine Wisdom." Throughout the ages this message has been repeated to benefit the struggling cultures of their time.

As the narrative in "The New Cycle" continues H.P.B. makes the point that since the soul knows what it requires, and since everyone shares in the same physical world, everyone may (and in ages to come surely will) realize the logical necessity of one universal cause of existence. However dissimilar people with vastly dissimilar backgrounds might be every person shares in the same first cause. This unifying *principle* exists without form, yet manifests in every form: "It is all things and always One, Universal Essence which binds, limits and contains everything, and which everything contains" ("The New Cycle," *HPB Articles* I, 401).

It may be of interest to note that in recent years impartial observers have detected the presence of an innate human desire (or instinct) for unity. This altruistic feeling emerges in a complex and apparently fractured world. For instance, in *The Unlost Instinct,* (London, Jessica Kingsley, 1998), Psychologist Donna Williams records her observations concerning the inner conflict people experience because of a *defiant* instinct for unity. Studies repeated many times consistently show that her subjects (and patients) possess an instinct, or an unconscious need, to express feelings that would be identified with a culture of solidarity. In picturesque language, Ms. Williams describes people moving within themselves from the irrational stage of "no self and no other," to the rational stage of either "all self and no other," or "all other and no self," to a difficult to attain, but preferred, stage

of a "simultaneous sense of self and other." In the preferred stage, an inherent sense of solidarity, gives people a connected sense of "Self."

In a classic *Dialogue* known for its paradox, Plato has *Parmenides* declare: "The one must be both in itself and in another." The assertion that divine souls connect with both *the one* and *the other* agrees entirely with the theosophical doctrine that everyone has access to the powers of spirit. But, the current use of these spiritual powers appears to bring a bewildering array of disparity and pain. Alas, the inner impulse toward solidarity does not universally shine forth as yet. But as said earlier, one day it surely will.

~

Facets of Inquiry

How can virtues compete in a world of aggression and violence?

This question, pursued in the theosophical reflections that follow, often flows from frustration at the injustices we experience despite the best intentions. Many individuals, for example, work for peace in the world and yet war ensues. Well-rewarded but cutthroat business strategies might also be a source, as are the clichés that the squeaky wheel gets oiled or might makes right. This question also may arise from scientific studies that traditionally have been biased toward a competitive paradigm, akin to Darwin's survival-of-the-fittest theories, without the slightest consideration of alternatives. Do nice guys finish last? What are we doing, in theosophy not to mention thousands of generations of religiously inclined chelas, disciples and good Samaritans, if virtue is not a sought-after quality? Are the meek to inherit the earth—really? Do the ends justify the means—and just what ending is that? Is the universe inherently kind? Or are we by nature brutes? Where does water find its level? Our culture expresses this question in many ways. Several students of theosophy consider the question posed, to explore several facets of this inquiry:

AS DAY FOLLOWS NIGHT

When we consider all the cruelty and hatred in the world, the terrible acts of violence and aggression, we might come

to the conclusion, as many have done, that human beings are essentially selfish, mean and vicious. The ruthless survive, and the innocent succumb. The evil prevail, and the good perish.

But we would be wrong.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* states, "The embodied soul is gifted with faith." We would add, the embodied soul is gifted with love, compassion, altruism, peace, harmony, patience and kindness. This is our true nature. Everyone's true nature. Even the worst criminal's, the worst human predator's. For each of us begins our evolutionary journey as pure spirit. This spiritual nature is permanent, eternal, changeless and divine. It is what we truly are. Rather than original sin, we are born into original goodness.

As we proceed in our journey through matter, we enter into one form after another. These forms are impermanent, mortal, mutable and limited. Within these evanescent forms, we produce thoughts, feelings and actions that are either in harmony with our divine Self or are in disharmony with that Self. Those that are in harmony are of the same nature as the Self; they are real, permanent and eternal. Those that are not in harmony are of a nature contrary to the Self; they are false, impermanent and evanescent. The one lasts forever; the other lives and dies.

Moreover, those thoughts, feelings and actions that are not in harmony with the sacred Source of life engender karmic consequences that must be experienced by the being who created them. Deeds of violence and aggression against others will inevitably rebound upon the perpetrator. As the *Light of Asia* says:

> *By this* [the law of karma] *the slayer's knife did stab himself;*

The unjust judge hath lost his own defender;
The false tongue dooms its lie; the creeping thief
And spoiler rob, to render.
Such is the Law which moves to righteousness,
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;
The heart of it is Love, the end of it
Is Peace and Consummation sweet. Obey!

The law of Karma, then, by unerringly bringing us the exact results of our actions, teaches us to live in harmony with life: it teaches us virtue.

The entire universe is working towards peace and love and harmony. Acts of violence and aggression are weak and ultimately ineffectual protests that are doomed to fail and die. What chance do a few feeble errors such as these have against the incalculable, immeasurable power and expanse of the universe itself?

Periods of moral light and darkness follow each other as day does night. Now we are in a period of moral darkness. Our task is to see it in its proper context, as a passing phase within a greater cycle, and, more importantly, as a momentary aberration within an eternity of perfect love. Our task is to maintain our vision of the original goodness of life and to think and feel and act on that basis, no matter what those around us may think or feel or do.

THE JUSTICE IN RESOLVING DISSONANCE

If we look upon virtue and violence as two parts of a whole, we have a relationship. In what way are they related? Violence might be thought of as an advanced degree of unrest or perhaps a reaction to fear. Fear of what? Fear of losing anything one holds to be worthwhile. When viewed from

the point of view of a separate being, we see differences throughout the world—differences in dress, customs, food, language and beliefs. Are these differences sufficient to cause violence or aggression? The bigot or cultist might think so. However, from a wider perspective, these differences might represent points of departure from which one might expand one's view. How does one expand one's view? This requires a quantum leap to a realization that an expanded view of life has a purpose other than maintaining the familiar and comfortable.

Violence and aggressive behavior seem to be related to the acquisitive nature, whether an individual or a group. Virtue, in the context of its highest definition, is a quality that expresses itself for the good of all regardless of any differences. As in music, a dissonance is resolved by becoming part of the harmonious whole. "Our souls are as it were a music, of which our Bodies are the instruments," wrote Eliphas Levi (*Theosophist*, 1881, noted in Mahatma Letters LBS Appendix 1).

In this context; virtue might be the soul view while violence the material or limited perception that thinks and acts from a separative point of view not realizing its being a part of a whole or the one life. Yet in the *Key to Theosophy*, HPB notes, "Karma is the law of re-adjustment which ever tends to restore equilibrium in the physical, and broken harmony in the moral world."

Through karma, we see justice play out while "each part, as in the glorious *fugues* of the immortal Mozart, ceaselessly chases the other in harmonious discord on the paths of Eternal progress to meet and finally blend at the threshold of the pursued goal into one harmonious whole, the keynote in nature. *Absolute Justice* makes no difference between the many and the few." (ML Letter 120.)

VIRTUE

To ask if virtues can compete in a world of aggression and violence is like asking if it is worth breathing in a city with air pollution. The alternative is a rather grim prospect. Virtue is an expression of our humanness at its best.

The virtues are the life affirming principles that energize us to really accomplish worthwhile things in life. The word virtue should be thought of as a verb not a noun, active not passive. The virtuous do not stand in the shadows of the cathedrals of materialism, orthodoxy or self-centeredness. The virtues are the spiritual qualities that empower us to withstand and actually transform the misguided and out of control creations of our time. Like Dr. Jekyl, we have good intentions but our creativity is often misguided and we are sorrowfully ignorant of the Mr. Hyde-like monster we have created who has gotten beyond our control. Our present day world is a truly perverse anomaly. While there is no denying our technological genius which affects so many aspects of life—communications, medicine, transportation, food production, engineering, etc.—the verdict is certainly not in as to whether life is of a higher quality now for the majority than it was in the past. So why in heaven's name when we are so capable have we devastated the natural world, are so cruel to our fellow human beings, have no consciousness of how our buying habits affect the present and future, and act as if we don't know where cancer, heart disease, social unrest, ecological disasters and a host of other plagues come from.

Basically they are man made and we waste billions of dollars each year on curing the symptoms rather than eradicating the causes. We live like there is no tomorrow, as if the earth is the enemy, as if there will be no ramifications due to how we treat each other as individuals and as nations. We act as if

our salvation depends on the individual and collective accumulation of wealth and power, social, political, religious and economic. Somehow we forget that "You Can't Take It With You." Only the virtues such as honesty, courage, justice, fortitude, prudence, liberality and truthfulness, when emanating through our actions, keep the human sphere in harmony with itself and nature and reflects the essential oneness of all life. Only when we begin to act from our higher qualities, when we dip into those spiritual reservoirs within each of us will we begin to calm and dissipate the aggression and violence in the world (in ourselves) and replace our present blindness with a forward looking vision.

Rarely do we hear from politicians, educators or religious leaders any positive vision of the future. (At best the religious point of view promises something positive in the next world.) We are always looking to the past, "the good old days" when things were better. Our heroes are mostly from a long time ago. Although the teachings of Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, Plato, Moses, Quan Yin and many others are all inspiring and good, they still turn us back. We need a philosophy of the present; we need that living religion that binds us together now (L. *religio*). We need that true science (L. *sciere*, to know) that is not warped by political, religious or market ideology and begins to explore the world of moral and intelligent forces as well as matter.

The first of all the virtues is courage, because virtue has to do with living the truth as we now perceive it, and when shortcomings are revealed whether moral, psychological or spiritual, we must have the courage and honesty to make the necessary alterations to continue to grow as individuals, as a society and a world in a positive way. Since the forces of materialism, sensual life and psychic habit are so powerful, courage is a key for bringing forth all the other virtues. If we

understood better the laws of spiritual causation and how our moral life effects us in the long run, we would surely realize that aggression and violence are senseless voids and that "virtue is its own reward."

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Gleanings from Historical Journals

FROM: YOUTH-COMPANIONS FORUM

The following thoughts on Christmas were printed in December of 1932. "The Youth-Companions Forum," a question and answer department, ran in THEOSOPHY from 1930-1941.

It is said that all the Solar Gods were born on the 25th of December. What is the significance of this?

The proximity of this date to the time of the winter solstice, which usually falls on December 22nd, is given by HPB as a reason for this belief. From this point on, until June 21st, the days grow longer and the sun, beginning its northward journey, brings a daily increase of light and heat to the earth. In a higher sense this is a *rebirth* of the sun, marking the cyclic recurrence of both physical and spiritual energy. It is the forward impulse to both nature and man, giving us the opportunity to take advantage of the rising cycle in human evolution. Efforts made during a rising cycle are augmented in strength by the surge forward in nature; and, by taking advantage of this law, we acquire the stamina with which to resist the ebb-tide of spiritual energy which must come later in the year. This done, we start on a higher rung of the ladder when the next rising cycle comes around. May we not say,

then, that because *we* are Solar Gods in reality, we have a rebirth of solar energy in us at every Christmas time?

What is the symbolism of the Christmas Tree?

The custom of celebrating Christmas with an evergreen tree lighted by candles is not, as we might think, original with the relatively recent advent of Christianity. Rather, as so many other rites and festivals of the Christian church, it was borrowed and adapted from pagan faiths which antedate by far the coming of Christ. HPB, in her article, "The Origin of the Christmas Tree," tells us that "Fir trees have ever been held in honor by the ancient nations of Europe. As evergreen plants, and symbols of never-dying vegetation, they were sacred to the nature-deities, such as Pan, Isis and others." Long ago, when Germany was peopled with a pagan race, the priests celebrated the beginning of the sun's northward journey with highly ornamented pine boughs, and we may well think that our practice of lighting Christmas Trees with candles grew out of this ancient salutation to the sun on its annual rebirth.

What is the significance of New Year's resolutions, and why is it that they are so universally and speedily broken?

Few people are entirely satisfied with their mode of living and feel vaguely now and then that they should do something about it—reform in some ways, perhaps. But since they do not really pay any serious heed to it or really analyze just what is wrong with them, they soon forget until in its cycle this urge comes again. Due perhaps to the natural cycle of renewal at the New Year and usually as an aftermath of excess at the Yuletide, they join in the making of resolutions for the coming year. It seems a good time to start and—"everyone

else is doing it." But these resolutions are but a passing fad, and since the persons making them seldom consider deeply just what is wrong with their lives and just what *is* the purpose of life, anyway, the "resolutions" serve only as a temporary stimulus, which is lost all too soon in the more pressing attractions of daily physical living. And so the good resolutions are "shelved" until the next year.

What in the cycle of the reincarnating Ego corresponds to Christmas and New Year?

Theosophically, Christmas and New Year's Day are really one and the same event as regards their spiritual significance. Likewise, the ancients, as well as the early Christians, saw not merely the external form in the celebration of New Year's or Christmas. Their celebrations were the expressions of a deep and spiritual thing, and undoubtedly they saw an analogy between the cycle of reincarnation and those festivals. The birth of the year is not an evident thing; it is a secret process. Spring is the open sign of the birth of something new, but the first of the year slips by with no visible change. It is a meta-physical, an inner thing. So with the soul. There is that secret moment of change from the old order to the new. It is not birth; that is the physical manifestation of the idea. But it is an event which takes place in the inner recesses of the spiritual heart, on the plane least material, in which the Ego can function. In that supreme moment of union with one's Higher Self—all of the past personalities are seen as precious beads upon a string. That supreme moment is but a moment. Then the Ego loses itself in the vapors of former selves and Karmic environment; it has come to birth. At this very moment, whether in quiet solitude or amid the noises of the city, that supreme moment is occurring for some Egos on the innermost planes of this earth.

BUDDHISM ON THE COUCH

A BOOK REVIEW

Author: Caroline Brazier
Published By: Ulysses Press, 2003

If you are looking for a good Buddhist primer with interesting perspectives, plus a few good techniques for mental-health practice, consider reading Caroline Brazier's *Buddhism on the Couch*. Brazier considers her book to be "Buddhist psychology." It also provides a sequel to the theoretical material presented in *Zen Therapy* and also in (husband) David's Book, "*The Feeling Buddha*." Does she mean these books are prerequisite to the present work? Probably not, as the book can stand alone. We are not given privy to what division of Buddhism she is coming from, but she does have brief references to the Mahayana tradition, the Pure Land Sutras, and "especially the Buddhist sutras of the Pali Canon." While she imputes the book has a value for those who work with others in "psychological or therapeutic ways" (and for those who "wish to develop their own spiritual training"), it does not have correlations with traditional psychoanalysis you may expect from the title (on the couch).

Brazier starts with the most basic to Buddhism, namely, the Four Noble Truths:

> Dukkha (affliction–birth, death, grief–the five skandhas), Dukkha Samudaya (response to affliction—thirst for self re-creation associated with greed), Dukkha Nirodha (cessation from self or to let go of self), and Marga

> (the right track or the Eightfold Path of Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Samadhi).

Put very plainly, the Noble Truths are suffering, our response to suffering, cessation from suffering, and the Eightfold Path to find the way out from suffering. It is the Second Noble Truth (our response from suffering), where Brazier gives her greatest attention, for it involves her perspectives on "Buddhist psychology." It might be said that Buddhism, as a religion, gives the greatest attention to Number 2. The way most of us respond to suffering is by creating a false self separating ourselves from all else. The creation of the self or selves gets in the way of knowing reality. As she says, "Buddhist psychology is sometimes described as a non-self psychology. The self is a defensive structure, built in response to affliction." And, "The self…is the fortress you create to protect yourself from experiencing the pain of loss and impermanence. It is your greatest defense mechanism. It is also your prison."

Things out there happen. And, they are not all good. We all die. We all get old. Most of us have disease and experience overwhelming loss. Our sensations bring about severe turmoil and pain. To cope we create the "self." There is a "me" and everything else. The term for this is "vijnana" which means "splitting the world falsely into one's personal experience and the rest." The characteristics of this false self are described as the skandhas. Brazier does a terrific job with skandhas. These passages may be very helpful to Theosophical students. Reincarnation is a core concept in the philosophy. Skandhas, it is said, are what pull us back again and again into incarnation. This process is given in the teachings yet so little seems to be directly described. In this Buddhist psychology book, however, focus and description are given.

The five skandhas are listed as "Rupa," which is form that includes self-identification; "Vedana"–feelings of attraction, aversion, and confusion. "Samjna" has to do with the associations you have with an object (inclusive of the self); "Samskara"–patterns of thought associated with the object; and "Vijnana" or the level of consciousness you have with the object. Possibly, these can be summarized thusly: You create a self, or better, a false self, e.g., "I am a business person." You can have feelings about this: "I like what this makes me. You may have associations: "A business person is important." With these associations other patterns of thought may come in, "A business person lives a certain lifestyle, is selective in friends, etc." A lesser or greater degree of consciousness can be given to this where it can become all consuming or moderately affect one's life. These are the skandhas.

Five skandhas are listed in the footnote (p. 129) of HPB's *Key to Theosophy*. The only difference may be with Samjna. HPB lists this as Sanna and reference is to abstract ideas. There probably is a connection with "abstract ideas" and "patterns of association" as listed by Crozier.

Before going further, let's back up to "non-self" Buddhist psychology. Although Caroline Brazier has much to say about the problems associated with the self, there is not the same punch when it comes to the non-self. She does say, "Non-self theory places people in dynamic encounter with one another and with the environment they inhabit. It acknowledges the ever-unfolding social process and the ways to which people provide conditions for one another." It sounds good, but a little hard to put your arms around.

There is a fascinating section on "transforming" skandhas from "common factors" to "rare factors." "The rare factors are elements into which common factors can be transformed

through spiritual training." In the Abhidharma, described as "an early collection of writings on the theories that underlie the Buddha's teachings in the sutras, there occur a teaching on the common or omnipresent factors, elements that make up the unenlightened state." A parallel is found with the teachings of the skandhas. Indeed, there seems to be. Instead of the first skandha—Rupa or form, the word Sparsha is used which has to do with "contact" and also an indication that it is used as a "self" indicator. But, this can be transformed to Smriti or mindfulness and "reverent attention." The second skandha, Vedana is the same. It can be transformed into Samadhi or deep meditative states. Samjna transforms into "transcending wisdom." The fourth skandha, samskara, is replaced with the word Chetana meaning intentionality of getting what the self wants. This can be transformed into Chanda which is aspiration or faith. The fifth skandha, vijnana is replaced with the word Manaskara which is referred to as self-seeking attention. The transformation here is to Adhimoksha or "reverent appreciation" and liberation.

What we seem to have is that skandhas are associated with the complexities of a superficial self. We could call this the Lower Self. Through spiritual practice, the skandhas (or something close to the skandhas) can be transformed into higher values. Can we not call these values to be associated with the Higher Self?

We could go directly into Hinduism with the concept of Ahamkara. This is defined by some as "egoism" or the identification of the self with Lower Self values. In the *Glossary,* however, H.P. Blavatsky states that this is "due to ignorance which separates our 'I' from the Universal One-Self." Maybe of even more interest, the gunas (see *Bhagavad Gita*–edition by William Q. Judge) of sattva, (quiescence), rajas (desire) and tamas (inertia), in Hinduism, can be cast

as lower self attachments. Krishna makes a strong point of this. But, whether transformed or not, these attachments have their counterpart in the Hindu Trinity of Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva (HPB—*Glossary*). These expressions of the divine can be included within the Higher Self. In other words, the gunas are expressed through different levels of consciousness.

All in all, there seem to be strong similarities between Hinduism and Buddhism. The Buddhists appear to do well with the "non-self." Unlike the Hindus or Theosophists, however, they do not seem to designate it as the "Higher Self." With respect to the "Self" and "Consciousness," the following quote from Sankara, the famous Vedantic philosopher, is fitting:

> The stupid man looks at his body and says, "This is I." The more learned thinks, "This is I" of his personality. But the wise man knows the true Self, saying, "I am the Eternal." He is individual, though without separateness. He has dissolved the "I" in Pure Consciousness.
>
> —*The Wisdom of the Hindu Gurus*
> (edited by Timothy Freke)

Is *Buddhism on the Couch* worth reading? It is. Particularly for Theosophists who want a broader understanding of mainstream Buddhism along with the similarities and differences of Theosophical teachings. H.P. Blavatsky does make reference to the "*inner* teachings of the Mahayana school of Northern Buddhism." And, "…the schools of the Northern Buddhist Church, established in those countries to which his initiated Arhats retired after the Master's death, teach all that is now called Theosophical doctrines…." (*Key,* Section I.)

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METAPHYSICAL GARDENING

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THE CELESTIAL GARDEN

…Adam, or "Man," begins his career of existences by dwelling in the garden of Eden, "dressed in the celestial garment, which *is a garment of heavenly light*" (*Sohar*, ii., 229 b); but when expelled he is "clothed" by God, or the eternal law of Evolution, with coats of skin…in which the divine spark begins its physical progression….The real man is the Soul (Spirit), teaches the *Sohar*. "The mystery of the earthly man is after the mystery of the heavenly man…[whose] "Soul and the *Form* when descending on Earth put on an earthly garment,…"

—*From* The Secret Doctrine

INTRODUCTION

Cycles and seeds are the tools of the metaphysical gardener. In *The Secret Doctrine,* HPB refers to the periodical renovations of our universe. Whether we call them kalpas, yugas, rings or cycles, they are the perpetual circles of time in which evolution takes place. These are the theosophical rounds and manvantaras; each one producing a seed harvested from the distilled or purified human experience—seventh root race humanity and Seed Manu (*"the seeds for the human races of the forthcoming Round") SD* ii, p. 308. These on-going cycles are the basis for the biblical Noah and the Ark. In this case, Noah represents a perfected humanity whose spiritual body is the ark or container of that seed destined to become the human root for the next evolutionary cycle.

As thinking or manasic beings, we clothe ourselves with the lives from the various planes of existence, thereby impressing these aggregate lives with our own nature. And, it is these lives which are fated to become the next human Ark. These lives are the soil and our thoughts the seeds. If we are to become the gardeners of this soil, perhaps we need a "Gardeners Book"? The following quote from Robert Crosbie offers a suggestion:

> From the beginning there has been an ideal towards which humanity is working. This ideal is in the God-mind, if you wish to use that expression—and can only be brought to full expression by action for and as that God-mind (*Answers to Questions on the Ocean*).

As we develop our capacities to emulate our "prototype in heaven," the spiritual soul, the better "metaphysical gardener" we will become.

THOUGHT, WILL, AND, FEELING: A METAPHYSICAL MATRIX

(Drawn from various theosophical works)

THE human Will is all powerful and the Imagination is a most useful faculty with a dynamic force. The Imagination is the picture-making power of the human mind. In the ordinary average human person it has not enough training or force to be more than a sort of dream, but it may be trained. When trained it is the Constructor in the Human Workshop. Arrived at that stage it makes a matrix in the Astral substance through which effects objectively will flow. It is the greatest power, after Will, in the human assemblage of complicated instruments. The modern Western definition of Imagination is incomplete and wide of the mark. It is chiefly used to designate fancy or misconception and at all times stands for unreality. It is impossible to get another term as good because one of the powers of the trained Imagination is that of making an image.

The word is derived from those signifying the formation or reflection of an image. This faculty used, or rather suffered to act, in an unregulated mode has given the West no other idea than that covered by "fancy." So far as that goes it is right but it may be pushed to a greater limit, which, when reached causes the Imagination to evolve in the Astral substance an actual image or form which may be then used in the same way as an iron molder uses a mold of sand for the molten iron. It is therefore the King faculty, inasmuch as the Will cannot do its work if the Imagination be at all weak

or untrained. For instance, if the person desiring to precipitate from the air wavers in the least with the image made in the Astral substance, the pigment will fall upon the paper in a correspondingly wavering and diffused manner.

Every thought (that is, an image formed by man) is a matrix formed by self-conscious beings, which at once energizes the elemental lives (which lives are without any directive capacity) and stirs them to action so that although the thought of the self-conscious being may be succeeded by other thoughts, the energy of the lives in that matrix will expend itself along the lines and to the degree imparted (it makes their body for the time being). So every thought we have provides a body and gives an impulse to the lives involved, and these act in whatever field of life may prove a fertile soil for them. The more we try to work from the inner side of our nature, the stronger the force we exert upon those lives. The power to make an image in the mind is the basis of thought. The human form itself is a matrix.

There is no "privative cell" as a separate thing; but if we remember that every entity clothes itself with smaller entities, and that each entity, as a center, has its own radius of action, causing a whirling or vortex, we may be able to understand it. It is the lives drawn within this radial vortex that constitute the cell; the central attraction draws them in, and holds them—that makes the privative limits. The form of the cell is due to the attractive power of the central energy, and it is always circular or spherical. The human being has his attractions and repulsions in accordance with the kind of energy he puts forth.

The solar system has its own collective attractions and repulsions and each planet, as a collection, can only approach so close to the sun as its nature will allow. The personal nature

has its own center, and, so to speak, forms a cell around itself and either opens up its center to the directive influence of higher states or shuts out all but the personal. These are "privative limits"; they are privative because they compel motion within their radial limits.

The centripetal force is the nature of the being, and lower entities will be caught and held at such a distance as marks the degree of the relation of their nature to the centripetal center. One might say that the solar system is a large cell and each planet, by its nature, is attracted so far towards the sun and no farther, because of repulsion set up due to difference in their natures.

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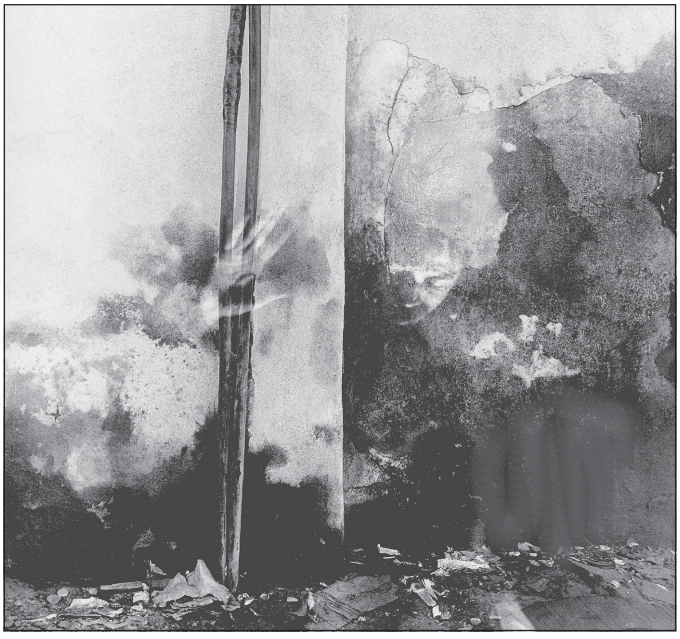

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ARE YOU WARM, ARE YOU REAL, MONA LISA: A STUDY IN PALEOLITHIC BLACK

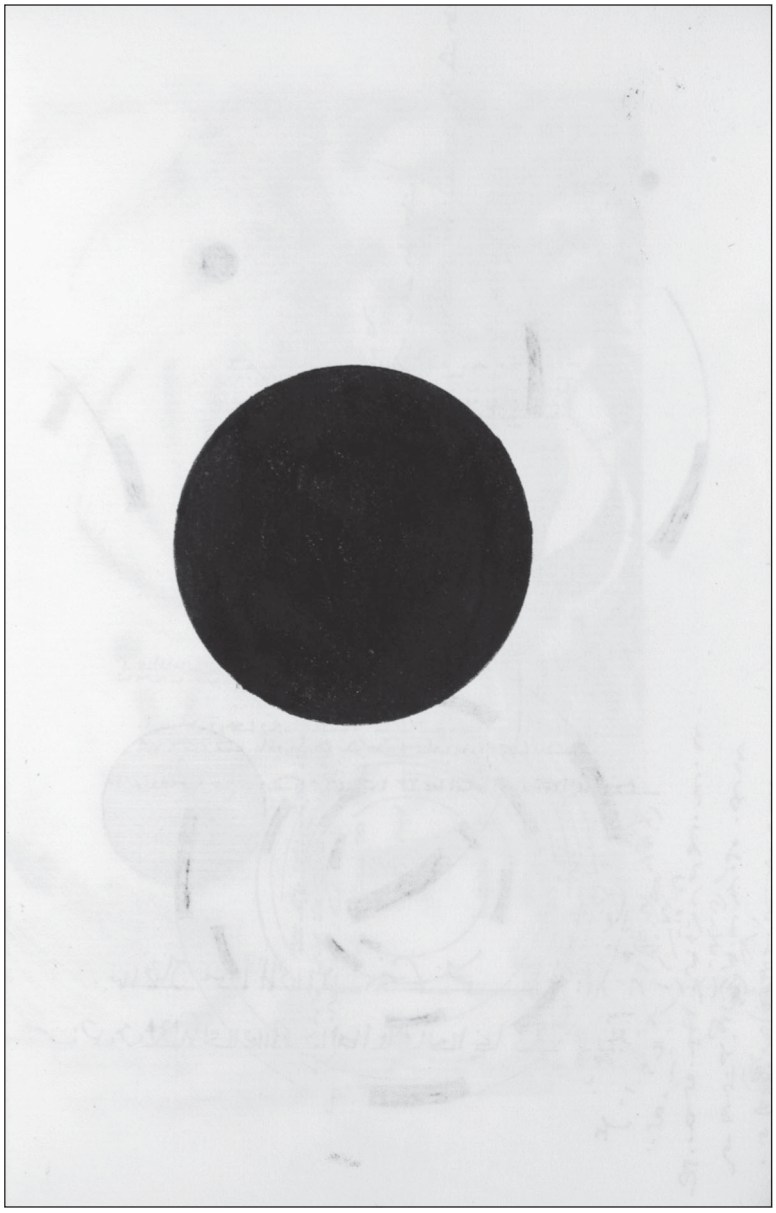
> Unity sustains. Radical unity sustains fundamentally. Theosophy is based on radical unity. Theosophy teaches a unity so radical it unifies the opposites dark and light. Over and over HPB directs us to the understanding of this unity. "Light and Darkness are identical in themselves, being only divisible in the human mind…" "Darkness adopted illumination in order to make itself visible." "Darkness, in its radical, metaphysical basis, is subjective and absolute light; while the latter in all its seeming effulgence and glory, is merely a mass of shadows, as it can never be eternal, and is simply an illusion, or Maya. Even in the mind-baffling and science-harassing Genesis, light is created out of darkness 'and darkness was upon the face of the deep'." "A day may come when the eyes of men will be opened; and then they may comprehend better than they do now, that verse in the Gospel of John that says 'And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not.'"
>
> —*The Secret Doctrine,* i

THESE words from HPB have sustaining power. They unite the mental separations that function as name and form. Perception of separate form acquires emotional sensations (the desire realm) along with name, which further contributes to feelings of separateness. The secrets contained in the *SD* enable us to integrate what we experience through a feeling of oneness across all levels and all boundaries. Separation of name and structure: organic/inorganic,

molecule/compound, individual/society, church/state, science/art, political ideology/free thought, even that of time/space, are vanquished by the sensation of oneness. The clarity of three hundred sixty degree timeless vision is provided by application of theosophical fundamentals.

In 1910, the surgeons Moreau and LePrince wrote about their successful operation on an eight-year-old boy who had been blind since birth because of cataracts. Following the operation, they were anxious to discover how well the child could see. When the boy's eyes were healed, they removed the bandages. Waving a hand in front of the child's physically perfect eyes, they asked him what he saw. He replied weakly, "I don't know." "Don't you see it moving?" they asked. "I don't know" was his only reply. The boy's eyes were clearly not following the slowly moving hand. What he saw was only a varying brightness in front of him. He was then allowed to touch the hand as it began to move; he cried out in a voice of triumph: It's moving! He could feel it move, and even, as he said, "hear it move," but he still needed laboriously to learn to see it move. Light and eyes were not enough to grant him sight. Passing through the now-clear black pupil of the child's eye, that first light called forth no echoing image from within (*Catching The Light*, Arthur Zajonc).

The difficulty the congenitally blind have in learning to see, even when the physical means has been completely restored, is related to the general problem of dark's relationship to light or, symbolically, black to white. To understand that we have been taught to see through separateness is the beginning to the movement on the path to understanding the first and second fundamentals of theosophy: the unity of all phenomena, and cyclical causation.



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How do we learn to see theosophically? Where is this unity to be found that reveals the darkness of Maya and clears the lenses of the eye/mind? Answers are offered in what HPB calls "actual history." Actual history repeats itself. It proceeds like everything else, in cycles. HPB also emphasizes that the dead facts of ordinary history which are deliberately drowned in the sea of modern skepticism ascend, and then ascend again.

ARE YOU WARM, ARE YOU REAL, MONA LISA?

In our era, it is nearly impossible to write about actual history with reference to light and darkness without the idea of the Renaissance. The word Renaissance is from the French and means simply the rebirth of light culturally and intellectually after a period of darkness. And it is nearly impossible to discuss the Renaissance without reference to its foremost genius, Leonardo da Vinci. He is one of the few figures in all of history who may well have won three Noble prizes: one in chemistry, one in physics, and one in literature. And then, in his astounding art, he was creator of the most famous painting of all time, the *Mona Lisa.*

The theosophical implications of the *Mona Lisa* and da Vinci's work taken all together and in context remain little known. Modern treatments of da Vinci and his most famous painting bog down through disconnected reference to his innovations with techniques. His use of the Wisdom Tradition remains lost to moderns. (Current examples are the mystery novel *The Da Vinci Code*, the Julia Roberts film "Mona Lisa Smile," and "Mona Lisa" sung by Nat King Cole.) That da Vinci's use of ancient wisdom involves metaphysically bringing light out of darkness are outside of the scope of many popularizers. With a theosophical point of view we

can more deeply appreciate that it was Leonardo who was the first to specifically identify and use symbolically the way "shadows of objects seen off in the distance are not as sharp as those viewed close up, and that distant objects are not as crisp in outline as those nearer the eye. He recommended that artists make allowances for these subtle atmospheric conditions so as to render more accurately the landscape of nature" (*Art and Physics*, Leonard Shlain). That he was able to integrate this basic, this universal, about dark and light with mathematics, perspective, and geometry is marvel enough; that he did so to convey metaphysical truths about the feminine side of humanity is astounding to the nth degree.

A deep secret of Leonardo's genius was the way he used perspective to convey spiritual truths. Perspective is typically defined in terms of procedures for the artist, but for theosophical understanding the definition is related to you, the viewer. What does the term "perspective" mean when you look at something? When you see, for example, the moon high in the sky, how does it differ from seeing it at the horizon?

When you look toward the horizon you see that trees, telephone poles, cars, look to you smaller and less distinct in direct relationship to their distance from you. When the moon is at the horizon, it is in the context of those reference points of relative scale and distinctness. With such references the moon acquires its seeming enormity. However, when the moon is high in the sky and you do not have those intervening effects of perspective, its size appears smaller. Perspective is not just an artistic technique; rather it is something we immediately experience through how vision operates relative to context. It's a basic. It's a fundamental of human experience. And it depends on darkness and light.

Leonardo's genius with perspective is especially evident in *Mona Lisa*, for the focal point of the perspective he used is actually *behind Mona Lisa*'s head. When you look at *Mona Lisa* she is a commanding presence. The perspective then draws your mind's eye up to mountains in the distance, and then further out toward infinity. Theosophically, perspective is geometry. Recall as described above the essence of perspective is relationship of scale to dark and light. Remember, too,—and this is a wow point—classically perspective is a symbol of divinity. Geometry for Renaissance artists like da Vinci is representation of the divine. The emphasis in the composition of *Mona Lisa* on the integration of the techniques of perspective, sfumato (blending of light tones into dark), and chiaroscuro (treatment of light and shade in painting) is nothing other than darkness yielding to and creating light.

After preparation of the popular wood he used for *Mona Lisa* and drawing the motif, Leonardo invariably mixed the colors with ivory black. He also used special glazes again and again to model and remodel the effects of light emerging from the shades of darkness that surround Mona Lisa's face. Unlike many other artists who used linseed oil (which he thought too heavy and thick—it has a high proportion of saturated fats), he used instead a light-inducing distillate of walnut oil which he made himself.

During his lifetime, Leonardo was famous for his evident talent for imitating nature to perfection and when his first biographer, the painter Vasari, described the *Mona Lisa*, he all insisted on the work's realism: "Its limpid eyes had the sparkle of life: ringed by reddish and livid hues, they were bordered by lashes whose execution required the greatest

delicacy. The eyelashes, in places thick or sparse according to the arrangement of the pores, could not be truer. The nose, with its ravishing delicate, pink nostrils, was life itself. [...] In the hollow of the throat, the attentive spectator can catch the beating of the veins." Through sfumato Leonardo could attain one of his primary artistic objectives, that of interesting himself mainly in his model's personality: "The good painter has essentially two things to represent: the individual and the state of his mind," said Leonardo. To paint the soul rather than the body was in fact the ultimate aim of his work and the sfumato, lighting the portrait through chiaroscuro, accentuated the work's mysteries: "to plunge things into light is to plunge them into the infinite." (Louvre web site, Vincent Pomarede.)

Triumph over the Dark Ages, for Renaissance artists, was to be achieved by meditation on realistically portrayed beauty which conveyed spirituality. Realism was accomplished in a way that reminded continually about human mortality.

Ordinary histories claim that the illusory third dimension was invented little by little on a linear evolutionary timescale. This is that straight line of cause contrary to Theosophy's second fundamental. But even the straightest appearing lines return upon themselves. We learn, from taking the first two fundamentals as points of departure, that the *Mona Lisa*'s message and its mode of expression were in existence 30,000 years before the widely consented straight line version of their historical origins. The Renaissance was rebirth all right, but one in long, very long cycles of rebirths.

Classical paintings sustain through the connection of light and dark, the distant and the near; and this is done by unity of the organic and the inorganic. The *Mona Lisa* is a prime example of the use of light and dark to depict space in a way

that fits the Renaissance definition of perspective. It does have the capacity to magically create form out of darkness. This was achieved not only through the use of perspective, chiaroscuro, and sfumato, but also through profound awareness of the chemical properties of materials. The black pigments of the Renaissance were made of many different materials. The highly prized black of ivory black was made by treating elephant tusk ivory with intense heat. Elephant tusks have the peculiar structure of long tubules running the length of the tusk. These tubules contain oil. This oil and the surrounding carbon and minerals made the highly prized black that Leonardo used as a mix with all of his colors. Systematic study of chemical properties yielded intuitive knowledge of chemical interactions. Such study resulted, several centuries later, in wholly new ways of capturing and fixing the universal transformations of light into dark and dark into light.

In 1826 a new way of seeing and representing light and dark, achieved by a more mechanical means, captured the mind's eye. A ghostly image was the first to be captured. It was that of a village courtyard and granary framed by a pigeon house and a bread oven's chimney. This was the first photograph. Using a primitive camera, a pewter plate and light-sensitive chemicals, Louis Jacques Mondee Daguerre took a daylong exposure of this view, creating what he called a heliograph. The materials used in early photographs, silver and bitumen washed with lavender oil, involve changes at the molecular level. In these chemical changes the substances on the photographic plates (heliographic plates, that is) go from light to dark or from dark to light, depending on the stage of exposures and the materials used. "Light and Darkness are identical in themselves, being only divisible in the human mind…" (*SD* i, p. 70).

Take a look some time at the camera processing stages (pre-digital, that is) of black and white film. Look at the negative and then at the print and see the changing relationships of dark and light. Conjecture about what is happening at the level of molecules. Often it was silver compounds that were used to make photographic black and white film. Now science tells us that the metals like silver came from the death of stars. And what are stars called when they die? Black holes. And what are black holes? They are regions of spacetime from which nothing, not even light, can escape because gravity is so strong. At entirely different levels, from the atomic structure level to the level of collapsing stars, we can see the operation of unity of the opposites light and dark.

Some of the materials used in heliographs, like silver and platinum, are found in the very earth the early photographers stood on. Crucially, these materials were also found in the imperial reach of the kings and queens these photographers obeyed. Today examples of these early photographers' works share a roof with the *Mona Lisa*, for they are in the Louvre, France's world famous museum. In 1911 the museum became the center of the world's attention when a slightly mad Italian painter, Vincenza Perrugia stole the *Mona Lisa* to return it to its country of origin. This may prompt the question, Why was the *Mona Lisa* not in an Italian museum? The acquisition by the Louvre was the result of the close association of Leonardo with King Francis I. King Francis I installed Leonardo as his court painter and engineer. This was the time of Reformation inspired change and the time when Leonardo's philosophical approach to divinity would find support in France. History maintains that the two became very close friends, and that Francis I often enjoyed being in the presence of Leonardo and the *Mona Lisa,* which Leonardo took with him wherever he traveled. Francis I built a residence near

the royal court especially for Leonardo. Leonardo died there, with the *Mona Lisa* on the wall near his deathbed.

The *Mona Lisa* is indeed warm, and she is real. Visually she is ultrareal or hyperreal but in theosophical terms she simply is. The *Mona Lisa* is representation of the be-ness of the divine feminine. She is the generative eternal mother. And, point in fact (the second wow), she is the creator's mother. Leonardo da Vinci's mother was actually the secret subject of his painting. Leonardo used his love of his mother to create the world's most famous painting. Like no other painter before or since, he used painterly techniques to augment symbolic power. All three of the classical techniques: perspective, chiaroscuro, sfumato, were unified to convey the universal relationship of darkness and light. "Darkness adopted illumination to make itself visible" (*SD* i, p. 70). Could we have a more supremely sublime suffusion of higher Manas uniting with Buddhi? Symbolically and metaphorically this relationship is often conveyed with white versus black. "In this connexion, Blavatsky points out that Noah released a black crow from the ark before he sent out the white dove. Black crows, black doves and black flames figure in a great many legends. They are all symbols closely related to the primal (black, occult or unconscious) wisdom which stems from the Hidden Source" (A Dictionary of Symbols, *A Dictionary of Symbols,* J.E. Cirlot).

In Leonardo's life, this hidden source was his own mother. His painting of her surrounds her in black. This black is the warm, liquid, reflective, all pervading, self-oiling ivory black of burnt elephant ivory. Dark ecology, dark inequality, slave and ivory trades went together. The painting's profusion of shared facial features also reveal a procreative unity of mother and son sharing features. Unfortunately this unity has led some contemporary commentators into pitiable confusions.

One of the confusions is that *Mona Lisa* is a picture of Leonardo in drag. This is probably the most ridiculous of the many confusions. But there is also a foolish claim that the St. John depicted in another of Leonardo's paintings, the *Last Supper,* is actually a woman dressed as a man. Such confusions serve a two-faced obsession: exploitive wisdom denigrating consumerism and the projections of commentators with ill-defined polymorphous sexuality. "Let us remember too that darkness for both Victor Hugo and Richard Wagner signifies the maternal, and that light appearing out of the gloom represents a kind of crystallization. Jung also points out in this connexion that carbon—the predominant chemical component in Man's organism—is black in so far as it is charcoal or graphite, but that, in so far as it is a diamond (that is, crystallized carbon), it is 'crystal-clear water,' thus underlining the fact that the profoundest meaning of black is occultation and germination in darkness." (*Cirlot*).

BLACK MARIA RELOADED

In 1892 French born W.K.L. Dickson designed Black Maria, the first American film studio. It was known as the Black Maria because of its resemblance to police wagons of the time. The unwieldy looking black bitumen covered and black bitumen lined set of shacks had a glass roof. It was built on a circular track turntable to follow the sun. The first films lasted about 20 seconds. One of them, titled "Carmenchita," involved a "butterfly dance" and exposure of the dancer's ankle provoked the first act of film censorship.

Early movie makers used light from a stroboscopic flash to expose their film. Dickson used emulsion coated celluloid sheets wrapped on a sprocket driven drum. (The chemistry of celluloid also has its dark side as it was related to the transformation of carbon compounds to make more and more

destructive explosives.) Celluloid was also made in search for an ivory substitute. Ivory's connection to the slave trade made it expensive in every way imaginable. Dickson was urged on in his work by competition capable of capturing motion at a then astounding 10 frames a second.

Can there be any connection between these end-of-the-18th-century versions of movies and our digital motion extravaganzas like the much interpreted *Matrix* film series? Interviews with those in charge of special effects for these films have told of the martial arts training of the actors and the sensitivities to movement sequences of the cinematographers. The computer enhancements capitalize on the control of contrasts between dark and light that cinematographers can capture from live action sequences. And of course the use of multiple cameras involves multiple lenses which means multiple versions of Renaissance perspective so crucial to the artists who have worked with dark and light down through the ages.

Theosophists are most likely familiar with the parable nature of Plato's cave. Chained prisoners (us) see dark shadows of themselves in fire lit cave walls. They confuse these dark shadows for their entire world. They do not know and will not know the light of day. From this parable we are supposed to learn about breaking the chains of habit. Turn away from the shadows; emerge from the cave into the light of day. (In *The Matrix,* Morpheus tells Neo that to be truly free he must free himself from the Matrix.) The real world awaits. How does this straightforward teaching tool apply today when visual experiences, especially films, use special effects so mesmerizing in their visual impact that they develop followings of cultlike patrons and make millions and millions of dollars world wide in the first few days. How do these exotic products relate to previous innovations?

The history of film has been largely the intersection of materials development and innovation in techniques for capturing motion. Can we trace back, as so many non-theosophists do, along the line of progress to the Greek world of mathematics and optics and Plato's cave type analogies? Will this help us understand films like *The Matrix* and its use of computer-aided graphics running at 15,000 frames per second? And if we do so, do we have to accept the baggage of the divided self so characteristic of Greek thought? No, we don't. The special effects artists who created sequences like "bullet time" did so by using the high contrast of figures whose images executed motions under highly trained control. The same principle which da Vinci used is still being used even in the most sophisticated computer enhanced productions.

Linear thinking, particularly Darwinian linear thinking, is criticized by HPB more than any other system of thought. How pleased she would be by the conclusion of the French Ministry of Culture about the level of thought evident in cave paintings discovered in the south of France at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc. The drawings done in this cave show the modern equivalent of knowledge of how light emerges from darkness: all achieved 30,000 plus years ago. About a series of horses done primarily in carbon black pigment experts note "the impression of quantity and perspective emphasized by the progressive curvilinear bending of the heads. The shaping of the lower jaws is made with a stump and the line of the nostrils is finely outlined by scraping." (Webexhibits.org/pigments/intro/early.) To see these drawings is to know without doubt the continuity of the use of shade shadow black in all its subtleties that extends and extends and extends through the oneness of human consciousness. The materials used for the paints of 30,000 years ago involve complexity of formulation. Da Vinci experimented with extenders and

varnishes and so did the painters of Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc. They used an extender that was a mixture of biotite and feldspar. Biotite and feldspar do not occur together. They also heated bone, as da Vinci did, to 400 degrees Celsius to make calcium phosphate to be ground for ivory black and bone black. At Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc many signs and symbols were distributed about the representational images. While continual attempts to enhance accuracy were evident, there is also a process of geometricisation that changed the symbols.

And how beautifully sustaining is this continuity of sensitivity to the intelligence of materials. Techniques used for tens of thousands of years expand consciousness by their amenableness to abstract thought. To show generative qualities of darkness is to show Parabrahma, the All, the Infinite, the Absolute, the No-Thing and Nothing in action (see *SD* ii, p. 553). Paleolithic black, old as it is, is just one aspect of the stream of a cyclical universal. Oneness is sustaining. Yet as we know from the second fundamental, all phenomena are the result of cycles. Cycles are seen as separate. Day is day. Night is night. Where then is the unity? The unity comes as consciousness expands. Changes in how we see bring us back to unity, to oneness, and to our own universality. See one. Be one.

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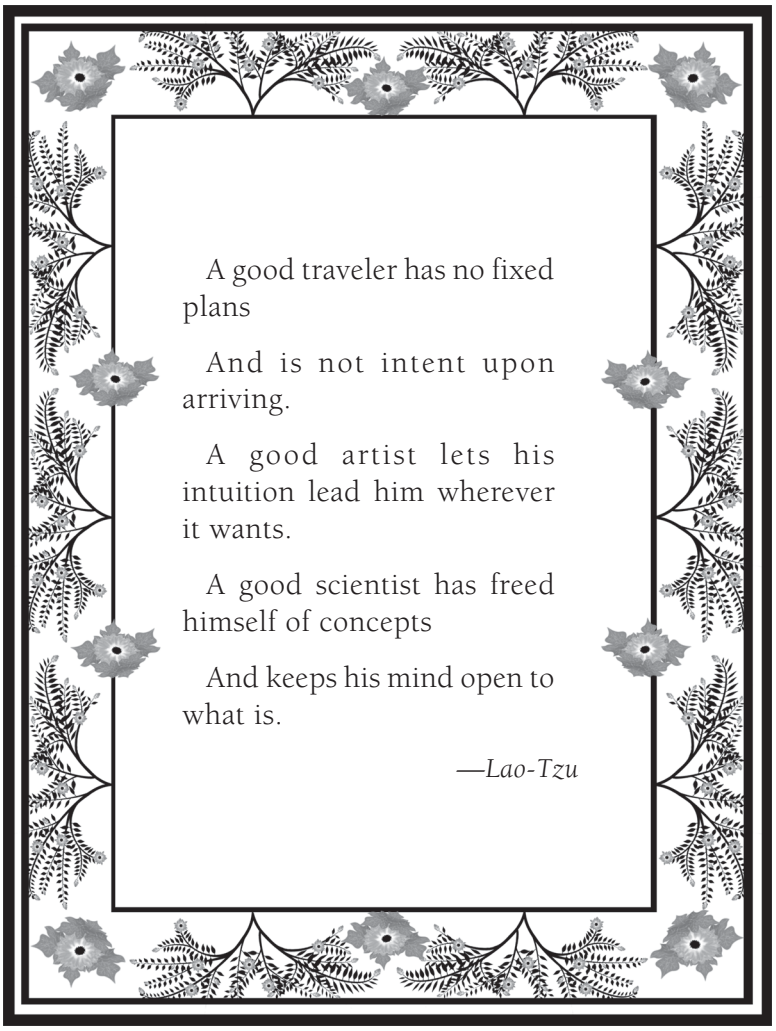
The Great Way has no gate;
There are a thousand paths to it, until
You walk the universe alone.

—Wu-Men



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THE SCIENCE OF IMPRESSIONS

THE following is drawn from two articles by Wm. Q Judge: "Cyclic Impression and Return and Our Evolution," and "Cities Under Cities." These articles shed light on the ancient doctrines central to the ideas of evolutionary cycles and how these cyclic impressions work within ourselves.

CYCLES AND THE RETURN OF IMPRESSIONS

What is a cycle? It is a circle, a ring. But not like a wedding ring, which runs into itself, but more properly like a screw thread, which takes the form of a spiral, and thus beginning at the bottom, turns on itself, and goes up.

But what do we mean by a cycle in our own investigations of nature, or man, or civilization? We mean by a cycle just what the Egyptians, the Hindus, and the philosophers of the Middle Ages meant: that there is a periodical return or cycling back of something from some place once more. That is why it is called cycle, inasmuch as it returns upon itself, seemingly; but in the ancient doctrines it is always a little higher in the sense of perfection or progress.

Cyclic law prevails everywhere. It prevails in every kingdom of nature, in the animal, mineral and human world; in history, in the sky, on the earth.

The idea of cycles came from the Hindus, through the nations who spread out from there, for it is admitted that the land of Hindustan is the cradle of the race. We find the Christians, the Romans, the Greeks and all people around that time holding the same theories as to cycles;

that is, that cyclic law prevails everywhere. We find it in the ancient mystics, the Christian mystics, the Middle Age mystics and the mystics of times nearer to ours.

Coming closer to our own personal life, we can see that cycles do and must prevail, for the sun rises in the morning and goes to the center of the sky, descends in the west; and the next day he does the same thing, and following him, you rise, you come to the highest point of your activity, and you go to sleep. So day follows night and night follows day. In looking at nature we also find that there are summer and winter, spring and autumn. These are cycles, and every one of them affects the earth, with the human beings upon it.

This being the supreme law, we have to consider another one, which is related to it and that is the law of the return of impressions. We mean by this that those acts and thoughts performed constitute an impression. Your going into the street and seeing a street brawl creates an impression. Your having a quarrel last week and denouncing a man, or with a woman and getting very angry, creates an impression in you, and that impression is as much subject to cyclic law as the moon, and the stars, and the world, and is far more important in respect to your development—your personal development or evolution—than all these other great things, for they affect you in the mass, whereas these little ones affect you in detail.

In respect to cycles and the evolution of the human race, it is to be described somewhat in this way: Imagine that before this earth came out of the gaseous condition there existed an earth somewhere in space. It lived its life, went through its cycles and at last came to the moment when it had to die; that is, the moment came when the beings on that earth had to leave it because its period had elapsed, and then began from that earth the exodus. You can imagine it as a flight of birds migrating.

When I was a boy in Ireland, I used to go to my uncle's place where there was an old mass of stone ruins at the end of the garden, and by some peculiar combination of circumstances the swallows of all the neighboring counties collected there. When the period arrived, you could see them coming in all parts of the sky, and they would settle down and twitter on this pile of stone all day, and fly about. When twilight came they rose in a body and formed a huge circle over forty feet in diameter, and that circle of swallows flew around and around in the sky, around this tower, for an hour or two, making a loud twittering noise, and that attracted from other places swallows who had probably forgotten the occasion.

They kept that up for several days, until one day the period arrived when they must go, and they went away—some were left behind, some came a little early, and some came too late. Other birds migrate in other ways. And so these human birds migrated and settled down as living beings, entities, not with bodies, but beings, in that mass of matter, at that point in space, informed it with life, and at last caused this earth to become a ball with beings upon it. That is the theory, broadly, and in that is included the theory of the races, the great seven races who inhabited the earth successively, the great seven Adams who peopled the earth; and at last when this earth shall come to its time of life, its period, all the beings on it will fly away from it to some other spot in space to evolve new worlds.

This law of impressions can be illustrated in yet another way: If you look at an electric light you will find it makes an image on the retina, and when you shut your eye, this bright filament of light made by a carbon in an incandescent lamp will be seen by you in your eye. If you keep your eye closed and watch intently, you will see the image come back a certain number of counts, it will stay a certain number of counts, it will go away in the same length of time and come back again, always changing in

some respect but always the image of the filament, until at last the time comes when it disappears apparently because other impressions have rubbed it out or covered it over.

That means that there is a return even in the retina of the impression of this filament. After the first time, the color changes each time, and so it keeps coming back at regular intervals, showing that there is a cyclic return of impression in the retina. If we look into our character, we find the same thing. If you do a thing once, there will be a tendency to repeat itself; do it twice, and it doubles its influence, a greater tendency to do that same thing again. And so on all through our character shows this constant return of cyclic impression.

Now take another case. I have a friend who is trying to find out all about a psychic nature, but I have discovered that he is not paying the slightest attention to this subject of the inevitable return upon himself of these impressions which he creates. I discovered he had periods of depression (and this will answer for everybody) when he had a despondency that he could not explain. I said to him, you have had the same despondency maybe seven weeks ago, maybe eight weeks ago, maybe five weeks ago. He examined his diary and his recollection, and he found that he had actual recurrences of despondency about the same distance apart. Well, I said, that explains to me how it is coming back. But what am I to do? Do what the ancients taught us, that is, we can only have good results by producing opposite impressions to bad ones.

What he should have done was, that being the return of an old impression, to have compelled himself to feel joyous, even against his will, and if he could not have done that, then to have tried to feel the joy of others. By doing that, he would have implanted in himself another impression, that is of joy, so that when this thing returned once more, instead of being of the same quality and

extension, it would have been changed by the impression of joy or elation and the two things coming together would have counteracted each other, just as two billiard balls coming together tend to counteract each other's movements.

Impressions also have a direct bearing on the question of the civilization in which we point ourselves. Who are we? Where are we going? Where have we come from? I told you that the old Egyptians disappeared. In my poor and humble opinion, we are the Egyptians. We have drawn back with us, by the inevitable law of association in cyclic return, some personages connected with us by some acts of ours in that great old civilization now disappeared.

Nothing is lost. If we were left to records, buildings and the like, they would soon disappear and nothing could ever be recovered; there never would be any progress. But each individual in the civilization, wherever it may be, puts the record in himself, and when he comes into the favorable circumstances for it, he will bring out the old impression. The ancients say each act has a thought under it, and each thought makes a mental impression; and when the [environment] is provided there will then arise that new condition, in rank, place and endowment. So we retain in ourselves the impression of all the things that we have done, and when the time comes that we have cycled back, over and over again, we come at last to an environment physically and in every other way to enable us and the others who are coming after us to do well.

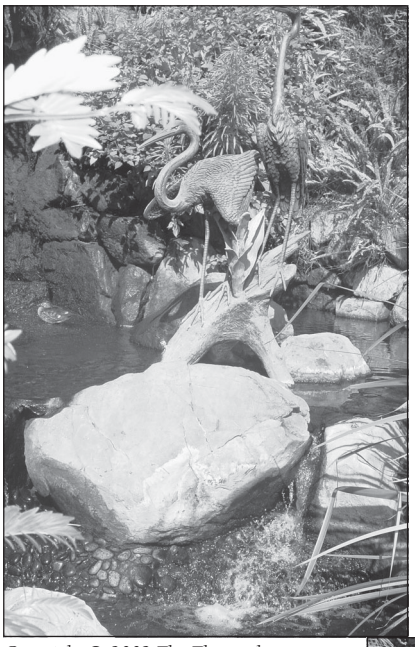
Expanding more upon the laws governing the return of these civilizations let's turn to the article, "Cities Under Cities":

"DEVAS AT WORK"

As man's civilization has traveled around the globe many times, his influence has been left on nearly every

spot upon the earth, as well upon lands now beneath the seas as on those above them. If we can imagine the first coming of a population to a place never before inhabited, the old theory asks us to believe that certain classes of elementals—called *devas* generally by Hindus—are gathered over the place and present pictures of houses, of occupations of busy the place and present pictures of houses, of occupations and beckon men to stay and build. These 'fairies," as the Irish call them, at last prevail, and habitations are erected until a city springs up. During its occupation the pictures in the astral light are increased and deepened until the day of desertion arrives. Then the genii, demons, elementals, or fairies have the store of naturally impressed pictures in the ether. These remain during the abandonment of the place, and when man comes that way again the process is repeated. The pictures of buildings and human activity act telepathically upon the new brains, and the first settlers think they have been independent thinkers in selecting a place to remain. So they build again and again.

This ancient theory states that there exists no mechanical or physical power over the pictures impressed in the retentive ether, nor over those classes of elementals which find their natural work in presenting pictures of cities and buildings to the receptive brain of man. If materialistic, these pictures will only be recognized subconsciously, and the subconscious impressions will translate themselves into acts just as hypnotized subjects respond to a suggestion they have no memory of. When, however, these elementals encounter a race of men who are psychically developed enough to see not only the pictures but also those entities which present them, it will then result that a conscious choice will be made, leading to a deliberate selection of one place for building on and the rejection of another.



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For the mind in
harmony with the Tao,

All selfishness
disappears.

With not even a trace
of self-doubt,

You can trust the
universe completely.

All is empty, brilliant,

Perfect in its own
being.

In the world of things
as they are,

There is no self, no
non-self.

—*Seng-Ts'An*

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A FORMULA FOR ENLIGHTENMENT: THE UNITY OF SPIRIT AND MATTER

THE PROBLEM OF DUALITY

IN this article we'll explore, in the light of the perennial teachings of theosophy, the problem of duality, and how we may solve it. This is a very important issue, because dualism lies at the root of all suffering. By dualism we understand the experience of being a separate "me," which automatically leads to experiencing the rest of the world as the "other." The "me" is not only seen as distinct from the "other," but also in opposition to it and thus the conflict between "me" and "you" (whoever or whatever that may be) begins. So the question arises: can this conflict ever be solved? Theosophy says it can, and we'll see why and how.

THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

We'll start by asking ourselves three important questions. If we don't ask the right questions, we'll never find or understand the right answers.

1. What is the relationship between spirit (or consciousness) and matter?

2. What is the relationship between subject (the seer) and object (the seen)?

3. What is enlightenment?

These three questions are strongly related to each other. They form one gordian knot which has to be cut with the sword of wisdom. It is clear that in the dualism of spirit vs. matter we find a psychological parallel in the dualism between "me" as a (conscious) subject and the (material) objects (including "you") around this "me." This makes the metaphysical question about the relationship between consciousness and matter a very personal one, because everyone of us experiences this "gap" or "gulf" between ourselves and the rest of the world. Unless this "gap" is bridged we'll never find the Peace that passeth all understanding. This brings us immediately to the third question *What is enlightenment?,* because enlightenment can be defined as the clear and deep Realization of non-duality; the realization that there is no separate "me" vs. "other." Enlightenment means there is no dualism between subject and object, between spirit and matter. Such a separation is an illusion; it does not exist in reality. But what does this mean? How should we understand this? We'll see there are a lot of misconceptions about illusion or *maya*, and unfortunately also about enlightenment or *nirvana, moksha,* etc. (or the bodhisattvic renunciation of it, for that matter).

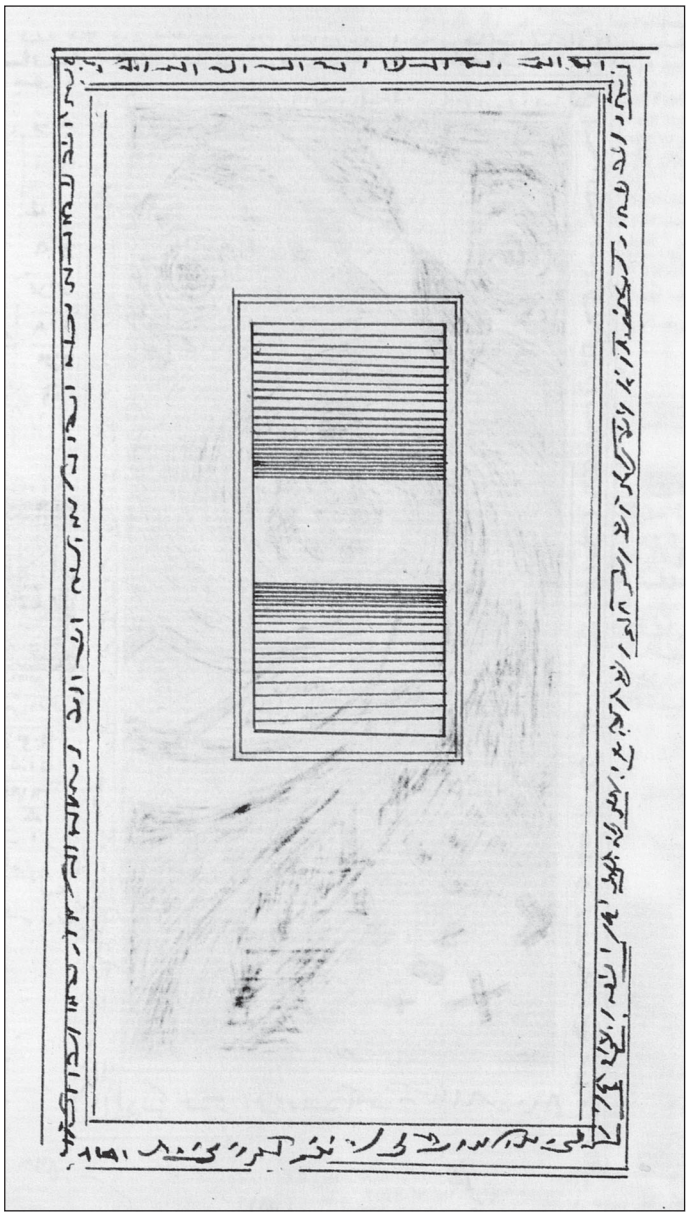
A SIMPLE ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROBLEM: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR BRAIN AND OUR MIND

The problem of dualism between consciousness and matter can be easily illustrated by showing the difference between our (immaterial) mind and our (material) brain. In our brain we can find *material* things like the neocortex, neuropeptides etc.. But in our mind we experience *immaterial* thoughts and feelings, like anger, joy or fear. No brain surgeon has ever

seen fear in your brain; he will only see physical stuff. On the other hand: when *you* are feeling fear, you experience fear, not something physical like adrenaline; you don't experience physical stuff, but mind stuff. Have you ever met a neuropeptide in your mind? In your brain maybe, but never in your mind. Of course there must be a kind of relationship between the physicality of the brain, and the immaterial mind, but which one? If our brain is material and our mind is immaterial, how can they ever influence each other? Is our mind the outcome of our brain, or *vice versa*? How can something material like our brain cause something immaterial like our consciousness, or the other way around?

THERE ARE ONLY FOUR POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM

All great philosophies, religions and sciences have thought about this problem of the relationship between consciousness and matter, between subject and object. We can not deal with all of them in length, but fortunately we can divide all world views in only four great categories, which makes our exploration a lot easier. Everything that has been or can be said about the relationship between spirit and matter can be found in these four great categories. They are called: (1) dualism; (2) objective materialism; (3) subjective idealism; and (4) objective idealism. Theosophy—as we will see—belongs to the last category, and we will see why the objective idealism of theosophy reconciles all opposite views, and can thus be considered as the most integral teaching. The remaining part of the lecture is focused on how these world views give an answer to the above three questions. The following is only a schematic summing up.



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DUALISM: THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN SPIRIT AND MATTER IS REAL

This world view seems the easiest way out, because it simply takes the experience of dualism for granted and declares that it is real: *Life or Reality is the result of the interaction between the opposites of spirit and matter.* Most monotheistic (exoteric) religions are dualistic (god vs. world; god vs. devil, etc.…). Also some eastern philosophies like Sankhya philosophy: *purusha* (spirit) vs. *prakriti* (matter) and some (southern) Buddhist schools are extremely dualistic (*nirvana* vs. *samsara*). See also some philosophers in the West, like René Descartes (1596-1650). His dualistic division between mind and body has influenced our Western way of thinking a lot.

In most dualistic world views enlightenment (or liberation) is the destruction of matter (evil), or the liberation from (not *of*) matter. Nirvana is the release *from* samsara (not *of* samsara), Enlightenment is becoming one with spirit (God, Heaven or whatever name you give to it) by conquering or escaping matter (the world). The eternal dilemma of all dualistic views is of course the following: how can one solve the problem of duality by trying to destroy or escape one of the poles of this duality, when both poles and the opposition between them are real!! That's impossible. This dilemma therefore often leads to surrogate solutions, like believing in miracles or the intervention of god, who will get us out of the chaos we're in.

Conclusion: Dualism does not give a solution to our problem; it evades the problem by making it real. If spirit and matter are real opposites they can never meet or act together. Rephrasing a famous poet (I think it was Kipling)*: matter is matter, spirit is spirit and never the twain will meet*.

OBJECTIVE MATERIALISM: ONLY MATTER IS REAL

According to objective materialism only matter is real, only objects exist. *Life or Reality is the result of matter*. Consciousness is only a by-product of matter, and is therefore not real, but an illusion. Only objective things are real (that's why it is called *objective* materialism) Mind is the result of the activity of our brain. When you are brain-dead *you* are dead, because *you* are produced by the brain. In this sense even a stone has more reality than love, because the first is a material thing and the latter is not and therefore unreal: love is nothing more than an epiphenomenon of physical reactions in the body.

Does materialism solve our problem of duality? Of course not, because materialism thinks it can solve the problem by simply denying one half of the spirit-matter/subject-object duality. Materialism only reduces one half of the problem (consciousness) to the other half (matter) That is only a mental trick, and not a very good one by the way. How can one truly claim that only matter is real, when it's only by our consciousness that we can be *conscious of* matter? Materialism is full of metaphysical contradictions, leading to one final conclusion, that materialism itself is not real. When we put materialism to the test, it must deny its own reality. Why? Because materialism is nothing more than *an idea*, namely *the idea that only matter is real*. But according to materialism this idea must be—like all other ideas—*immaterial* and therefore not real, because only matter is real. Isn't it funny that materialism is in itself immaterial. A materialist has at least to admit that the idea of materialism is not better or worse than any other idea, because *all ideas* are the by-product of the same physical atoms and chemical reactions in the brain. One can therefore never say that materialism is right

or wrong, because there are no right or wrong atoms. To sum up: materialism does not solve the problem of duality; it simply tries to deny one half of the spirit-matter or subject-object duality, thinking that by doing this the duality is dissolved. This is of course not true. The question of the relationship between consciousness and matter, and between subject and object remains unanswered. That's why the reaction of most scientists is: "forget the whole question!"

What is enlightenment according to materialism? Gather as much matter (objects) as you can, and you will be happy. The ethical consequences are tremendous, because if only objects exist, we may treat everything and everyone as an object for our needs. And is this not the current human condition? You see how ideas (especially wrong ones) rule the world, and how important it is to have right metaphysics before one puts them into practice. The survival of the world depends on it. That's why theosophy exists: to change and educate the mind of the human race.

SUBJECTIVE IDEALISM: ONLY CONSCIOUSNESS IS REAL

According to subjective idealism only consciousness is real, only the subject exists. Objects are an illusion. *Life or Reality is the result of consciousness*. Consciousness and not matter is the basis of Reality. Only the inner subjective (the ideal) is real. Matter is solely the by-product of consciousness, or the result of wrong perception by consciousness, a dream; in reality matter does not exist. This world view is very popular in the East (*e.g.* some—not all—advaitic teachings who misunderstand Shankara). Indeed, the conflict between the East and the West can be seen as a conflict between idealism and materialism, although one can find materialistic thinkers in the East, and idealistic thinkers in the West (like Berkeley).

Does subjective idealism solve our problem of duality? Of course not, it's just the opposite of the materialistic point of view, and it therefore leads to the same objections and contradictions. It uses the same mental trick as materialism does (only a bit more sophisticated). Idealism tries to solve the dualism between subject and object, between spirit and matter, by simply denying the matter-side of the duality, by reducing it to an illusion (like materialism tried to dissolve dualism by denying the consciousness-side). Idealism reduces one half of the dualism (matter) to the other half (consciousness). Just think and act as if matter does not exist, and everything will be all right. But of course, thinking and acting *as if* matter (or evil, *samsara*, *maya*, etc.…) does not exit, does not make it go away in reality. Unfortunately this kind of thinking strongly influences modern new age paradigms, like mental or Christian science, positive thinking and to a big extent *A Course in Miracles*.[1]

Popular ideas in new age writings are for example: "sickness is an illusion" or "my body is an illusion," "I am only healthy and holy," and other affirmations or denials. But this is really fooling yourself. Sickness is not an illusion, thinking that you *are* sickness is an illusion, but that doesn't change the biological fact that you *have* a sickness and should go the doctor, otherwise you may find yourself one day "thinking" you are dead. It's quite clear that such philosophies show a very bad understanding of the real idealism in the East. Because real Eastern idealism teaches that *everything* besides pure consciousness (the Self) is an illusion, not only the bad things in life (like sickness, or an unpleasant job), but also the good things (like a beautiful wife or faithful husband). A

[1] Although in my personal opinion this subjective idealism is more present in the onesided interpretations of some followers of *A Course* than in the book itself, but that's another topic.

genuine Eastern idealist will teach us that we have to escape from illusion *per se*, not substitute the bad illusions for good ones. Such an idea is typical for the narcissistic western mind, claiming that we can create our own reality. Only psychotics create their own reality; the real Enlightened Ones discover and accept reality as it is, and—as we will see—*Reality-as-it-is* transcends and includes all dualities, not only the parts we happen to like.

Not Reality, but our conceptual thinking is dualistic!

Why do the above world views (dualism, materialism and idealism) fail to explain the mystery of duality? Why are they not able to explain the relationship between spirit and matter? Well, the theosophical answer is very easy. The core of the problem is that *we* draw *a boundary* or borderline between spirit and matter, which we subsequently accept for real. By accepting this boundary for real, we see spirit and matter as opposites. That's how all dualities originate: not only the duality spirit vs matter, but also good vs. evil, big vs. small, cold vs. hot and even *nirvana* vs. *samsara*, or the Absolute vs. the relative. By doing this (or by thinking in such a way) we forget however that one half of a pair of opposites can never exist without the other half. Try to think of coldness without warmth, of small without great, of sickness without health, etc.…It's simply impossible, because each half of the pair of opposites is defined by the other half. Even the simplest pair of opposites shows us that dualism is unreal, is a creation of our lower conceptual thinking. Let's draw a line in the middle of this page:

You see that by drawing *one* line we have "created" at one and the same time left *and* right. We did not create left first and right afterwards. It's that one borderline that has "created" both at the same time (and we subsequently forget the wholeness of the white page). However: this simple drawing also shows us, that instead of *separating* left from right, the line makes it impossible for left to exist without right and *vice versa*. The line *connects* left to right, as much as it seems to separate them. And this is true for all so-called dualities: no birth without death, no good without evil, and no consciousness without matter, no subject without object, no perceiver without perceptions. This does not mean that matter *is* spirit, that big *is* small or that good *is* evil (that's not non-duality, that's stupidity), what it means is that they are never separated: they are One. That's something different than saying they are one and the same!!! That good and evil, big and small and all other so-called dualities are relative to each other does not imply they are identical.

To sum up: spirit is not unreal, neither is matter, neither are both, and neither are neither of them; what is unreal is the boundary between them. That's true for all other dualities. Life is non-dual and boundless, and expresses itself through all "opposites." Life is the unity of Spirit and Matter; Life is spirit-matter. Life is the unity of opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*). So our mistake is that we take our boundaries for real. But Life, Nature or Reality has no boundaries, that's why it's called boundless. Of course, Nature or Life has lines—like the line between a leaf and the air around it, or the line between the shore and the sea, but these are only lines, never boundaries. Nature uses lines to show us diversity in Its unity. Lines create differences, not separations. We create separations by transforming lines into boundaries. Lines however show us where the air *touches* the leaf and water

touches the shore. Lines show us Unity in action. Nature may draw a line, but never a borderline. Only humans suffer from borderlines (and maybe some animals that have lived too close with humans, but normally an animal does not need therapy. Has anyone ever seen a butterfly with a neurosis?)[2] Lines connect and they are real; boundaries separate and they are not real except in our mind, and that's why separateness is called an illusion.

THE OBJECTIVE IDEALISM OF THEOSOPHY

Now we can have the beginning of a clear understanding. What we humans are inclined to do is taking our mental boundaries for real, and subsequently asking a lot of difficult questions, which of course can not be answered as long as we don't see the illusion of the boundary. Why is it so difficult to see the illusion of this boundary? Because such a recognition would immediately mean the realization that also the boundary between "me" and the rest of the world is

[2] This does not mean that we have to go back to the animal stage. We've been there, done that. Animals do not suffer from dualism, because they are pre-thought (just like babies); we however have to go *beyond* dualistic thought; that's a huge difference! A baby is pre-dualistic thought, a buddha is trans-dualistic thought. We should not confuse these two levels: *a buddha is not a baby*. There is something similar between them, because both are able to be in a state of no-mind. But the baby is in such a state unselfconsciously, because mind is not yet developed, and a buddha is in such a state Selfconsciously because he is beyond the developed mind. If a buddha needs to, he will use his mind; a baby can not use it. So, to pass beyond intellect, one first must have intellect. No-Mind—a much misunderstood concept—does not mean not-thinking, but being beyond the duality of thinking and not-thinking. A buddha does not stop thinking, he uses his mind whenever it is necessary (*e.g.* when he has to teach something to us poor dualistic beings). He does not loose his intellect or mental faculties when he becomes enlightened—that would be regression not progression—; his mental faculties are even more developed than our mind is, because he has transcended thought and therefore he can use it better.

unreal, even more: it would mean that everything "I" thought about myself is not really "me" at all. And what would than become of "me" if "I" do not exist? That is a very scary thought for this "me," and that's why "I" will do anything in order to avoid such a realization; "I" will even invent impressive theologies in order not to become enlightened. And indeed, all our life-energies, all our feelings, all our thoughts are put into this escape from *Who I really am*. And than we are surprised that we feel so tired all the time. Isn't it obvious why this is so?

Most of the time, this "escape" from non-dual Reality means two things: (1) some of us humans will take the boundary and thus the duality for real, never questioning the reality of the boundary. And we will fight at whatever cost in order to stay on the "right" side of the borderline. Unfortunately there are other humans who think the same way, and who imagine that *they* are on the "right" side, and you on the "wrong" side. And there you have it: an eternal war of opposites. (2) Some other human beings still take (unconsciously) the boundary for real, but try to solve the problem of duality by denying the reality of one of the sides of the "duality." Some will deny matter, call matter or the world an illusion and that's it (idealism); others will deny the reality of consciousness and stop there (materialism).

The dualist takes the opposition between spirit and matter for real; the materialist takes matter for real, and calls consciousness an illusion, and the idealist takes consciousness for real, and calls matter an illusion. *What all of them forget is to doubt the reality of the boundary between spirit and matter.* Consciousness is not an illusion; matter is not an illusion; the separation between them is an illusion. And we will never understand the relationship between spirit and matter, between subject and object; neither will we understand what

enlightenment really means as long as we take the boundary for real, or deny the reality of one of the sides. Such an understanding is the heart of theosophy, which is an objective idealism. It is an idealism because it acknowledges the reality of consciousness; it is objective because it acknowledges the reality of matter; and it is both, because it acknowledges the unity of spirit and matter. *The One Life is Spirit-Matter*. As is stated in the famous *Heart Sutra*: Form is Emptiness and Emptiness is Form. We are THAT which transcends both *and* we are both at the same time: we are the unmanifested Emptiness and a manifested Form, and therefore we are non-dual and have always been. We are Emptiness embracing Form; we are Form expressing Emptiness. Only this realization makes it possible to understand real non-dual (not partial) Enlightenment, which is Enlightenment defined not as an escape from *samsara* into *nirvana* (that's the dualistic way of the *jivanmukta* or *pratyeka-buddha*, and such a *nirvana* will never last, because Life itself is non-dual and will push the *nirvanee* back into *samsara*), but as a *nirvanic* embrace of *samsaric* suffering.

When we look at this world in a dualistic way we see *samsara*, when we look at this world in a non-dualistic way we see *nirvana*. It's simply not the Ultimate Truth to say that this manifested or material world is a hell or *samsara*, and that the unmanifested spirit is *nirvana* or heaven. No: *Samsara* is seeing and experiencing *this* manifested world *as apart* or *as separated* from the unmanifested Being. And *nirvana* is experiencing *this* manifested world as a manifestation, as an eternal celebration of the unmanifested Being. That's the non-dualistic attitude of the bodhisattva, the highest ethical ideal in theosophy, because it is the natural and spontaneous application of the highest metaphysics, which reconciles all dualities, even the duality between duality and non-duality.

TO CONCLUDE: SOME STATEMENTS ABOUT ENLIGHTENMENT

The above explains also why "you" can never become one with Reality, with Life, the Absolute or the Godhead (or whatever name you give to THAT), because you were never separated from THAT in the first place. Unity can only be understood and realized, but it can not be created, because IT exists already. "Me" trying to become one with the Absolute will be counter-productive, because the very effort will reinforce the false conviction in the existence of a "me" as a separate entity, it confirms the illusion that "I" am not THAT, and therefore "I" will of course not succeed.

Enlightenment does not mean that there is a separate "me" that becomes enlightened; it means the realization, the recognition that there is no separate "me" or personality at all. This does not mean that there are no *individualities* or *beings,* or that you as a being do not really exist, and that you will disappear into thin air when you become enlightened (another huge misunderstanding about enlightenment, maybe caused by taking the metaphor of the drop disappearing in the Ocean too literally, what we should never do with metaphors, because that's why they are metaphors). What disappears is your false conception about yourself and the world. Remember that the misery started with a false conception in the first place. So do not worry: neither you (as a being) or the world (the other beings) will disappear when you are enlightened. So, when it is being stated by Enlightened Ones: "there is no me, there are no others." They only mean to say that they no longer perceive or experience themselves *as "I"* or the others *as "others."* They do not mean to say that everything becomes a luminous mush of homogeneous jelly. Besides, if with enlightenment our individualities—meaning "we" as beings not "we" as separate

personalities—would cease to be, well why bother anyway. It would than be better if we would have never existed in the first place. So to be very clear: When the separation between subject and object disappears, this does not mean that you feel that "you" (in here) is the same as the object (out there). Such a feeling is possible—Patanjali will tell you how to do it—but that is not enlightenment. Enlightenment is being One with Reality, not becoming one with an object; and of course once you realize you are one with Reality, you are one with the Reality of all objects—and Patanjali will tell you also how to do this—, but that's something else than becoming one with an object. Rest assured: you are *not* the paper of this page you are reading, or the grapefruit on your table, nor any other object, because if you were you would not be able to perceive them: whatever you can perceive or think about You are not, because these are objects of perception or objects of thought, and You are Witnessing them.

Real enlightenment means that you see or feel *no separate* you and *no separate* object—only the fact of perceiving (on whatever plane you happen to be evolving on as a form). Only the subject vs. object dualism vanishes; the subject and objects don't vanish, but the "gap" between them does. Or rather, it is finally understood that such a gap never existed in the first place. When such an understanding is no longer a flash of insight—and don't fool yourself, in the beginning and for a long time it will not be anything more than that—and will become a permanent realization, than these enlightenment-happenings will transform itself in Liberation, which is not a liberation *from* samsara, but a liberation from the duality of *nirvana* and *samsara*. Such a Liberation is identical with the renunciation of (the partial) *nirvana*, because you refuse to be liberated from *samsara* in order to liberate *samsara*.

All methods or techniques (meditation, prayer, yoga, service, study, even practicing the paramitas[3]) to become enlightened will ultimately fail, not because the error is in the method and we therefore should use indiscriminately all methods or not use any method at all (that's another huge misunderstanding, popular in certain modern schools); you will fail because there is something wrong with *your attitude towards* the method. When that attitude is rooted in the belief that there is a "me" using the method there can only be failure. That's why so many students suffer on the spiritual path, and complain that there is no progress: they still think "they" are treading the Path, while they have to realize that there is no "they": they have to tread the Path from the perspective of being that very Path. You cannot tread the Path unless you have become the Path says *The Voice of the Silence*. We do not have to reach the Self as something outside of us: we have to act as and for the Self (says Mr. Judge).

The biggest mistake we can make is making the Self into an object, and who knows how many times we meditate on the Self as an object of meditation: each time you find yourself doing that you should ask yourself: Who is the subject meditating if my Self is now an object of meditation? Can my real Self be outside of me? Can it be an object in my consciousness? If so, what is than this consciousness Itself watching this so-called Self? These are the real questions. One may visualize or think about the Self 'till the heavens come down, the best result you will ever get is that you will become one with a beautiful visualization, but that's not the

[3] Practicing the paramitas will make of you a better form or being—and it is therefore necessary because you are also that form and not only emptiness, which is already perfect. But no ethical practice as such will give you enlightenment. That's why enlightenment is called Self-Realization, not Self-improvement.

Self (that's a beautiful thought *about* the Self): you will find the Self easier when you ask yourself: Who is perceiving this visualization? Who is thinking about the Self? Who is meditating? Indeed: meditation on meditation is the best meditation. It will not give you fireworks, or any other big psychic or spiritual thrill; because Who is perceiving or experiencing these phenomena anyway? It will give you Truth, the only Truth that will set "you" free, the realization that you were never imprisoned at the first place. And that's not an experience, because any experience is only an object in Your perceiving Self: so do not look for an experience, it will keep you from the Truth. But that seems so boring? One may ask. Well, it is from the perspective of your little ego. But never forget even boredom is just another object of experience and therefore is not YOU.

Pseudo-enlightenment is like a wave trying to become one with the Ocean, while it has never left it in the first place. We are waves—all beings are—of the ocean of Life (theosophy calls these waves monads), thinking that we are separated from the ocean and from all other waves. What we have to realize is that we are the water of the ocean, and that this water is the same in every other wave, in the sense that no wave is more wet than the other. Even the most polluted wave is as wet as the purest one. It does not mean that waves do not exist—every surfer knows they do—it means that *we are* at the same time the timeless water (emptiness) *and* a temporary wave (form) giving expression to the wetness of the ocean. By realizing this real nondual Unity, we may celebrate and serve the Diversity of all other beings. By knowing that we are Being, the Unmanifested One, we may hold in a bodhisattvic embrace the manifested Many, realizing that the Many is not opposite to the One, but that the Many are the ever Becoming of that timeless Being. Like ocean and waves are both the expression of the same water or wetness, Being and Becoming

are both the expression of the same Absoluteness or Be-ness. Do not think that Absoluteness is only the Absolute, it includes also the relative. It's the Absolute of the Absoluteness that enables IT to transcend and therefore include the relative. If THAT would only be Absolute, IT would be limited by its absoluteness and it would no longer be Absolute. If you understand this, you may consider yourself blessed.

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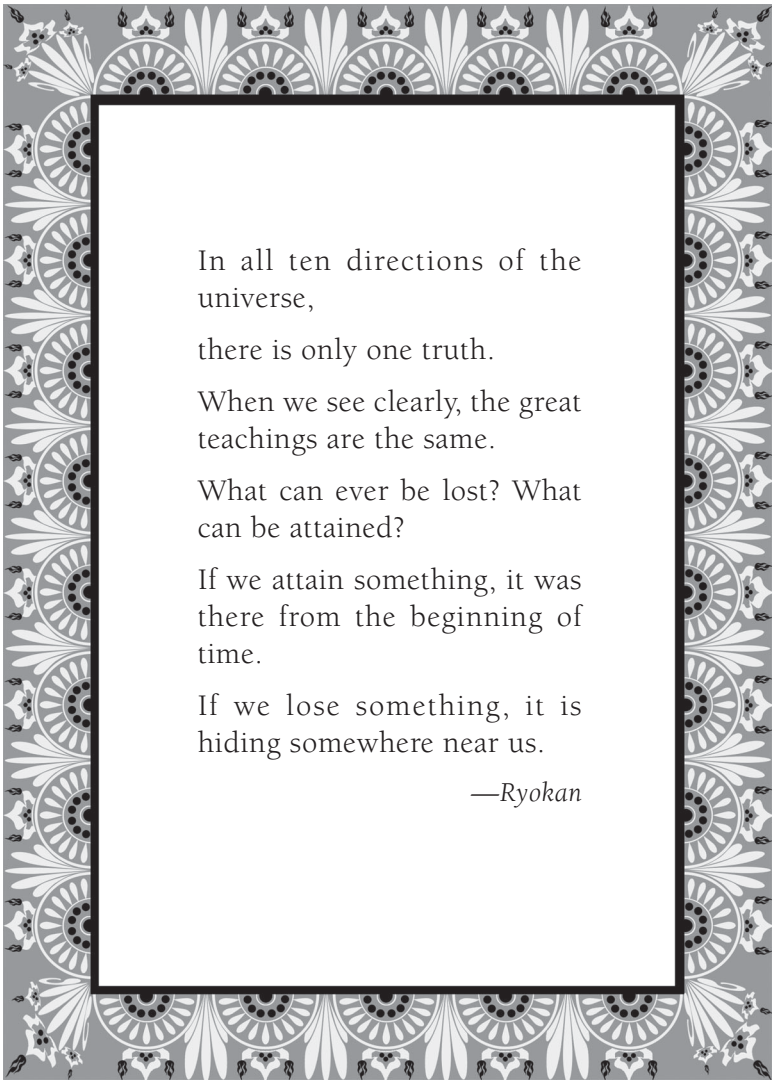
For every flower of love and charity he plants in his neighbour's garden, a loathsome weed will disappear from his own, and so this garden of the gods—Humanity—shall blossom as a rose.

—*HPB,* Key To Theosophy



In all ten directions of the universe,

there is only one truth.

When we see clearly, the great teachings are the same.

What can ever be lost? What can be attained?

If we attain something, it was there from the beginning of time.

If we lose something, it is hiding somewhere near us.

—*Ryokan*

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On the Lookout

Shrouded Configurations

The work of abstract artist Jackson Pollock is the subject of a significant article by Jennifer Ouellette in *Discover*, November 2001. Pollock's art continues to be admired today, as it was at the peak of his popularity in the 1950's. A collection of his work displayed several years ago at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City drew record crowds. There is a reason for this enduring appreciation according to physicist and art historian Richard Taylor. In 1995 Taylor was on sabbatical in England working toward a master's degree in art history. His concentrated study of art led him to observe repeating patterns of differing size in Pollock's "drip" paintings. To Taylor, a trained mathematician, the patterns resembled fractals.

Subliminal Patterns

Fractals are geometric patterns, repeated at various levels of magnification, and are often the visible evidence of the organization of a larger system. Chaos theory describes such systems. A hurricane, for example, is a chaotic system that has a fractal pattern within its path of destruction. There are irregular shapes in nature that also display fractal patterns. The path of a river and the branching of a tree, for example, repeat a basic pattern. Mathematicians have a scale for ranking the fractal dimension:

> One-dimensional fractals (such as a segmented line) typically rank between 0.1 and 0.9, two-dimensional fractals (such as a shadow thrown by a cloud) between 1.1 and 1.9, and three-dimensional fractals (such as a mountain) between 2.1 and 2.9. Most natural objects, when analyzed in two dimensions, rank between 1.2 and 1.6.

Unveiling Significance

Taylor tested his observation of repeating patterns in Pollock's paintings in his lab at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. He used 20 paintings dating from 1943 to 1953, the period when Pollock used a drip technique. Taylor took photographs of the paintings, then scanned the photos into a computer. He used the computer to analyze the patterns within each painting. He found that the fractal dimensions of Pollock's drip paintings are very similar to those found in nature.

> A skeptic might suggest that the effect is coincidental. But Pollock clearly knew what he was after. The later the painting, the richer and more complex its patterns and the higher its fractal dimension. *Blue Poles*, one of Pollock's last drip paintings, now valued at more than $30 million, was painted over a period of six months and boasts the highest fractal dimension of any Pollock painting Taylor tested: 1.72. Pollock was apparently testing the limits of what the human eye would find aesthetically pleasing. Taylor theorized that it was the fractal dimension of Pollock's work that accounted for its lasting popularity. In order to test his theory he devised a mechanical apparatus to drip and fling paint upon paper, producing fractal and non-fractal patterns. He surveyed 120 people and found that 113 preferred the fractal patterns. He also found that it was difficult to produce fractal patterns with the mechanical device. Taylor is confident that the fractal

dimension of Pollock's paintings was a conscious result of the way he dripped the paint on the canvas.

"*Mind in Nature*"

Other studies in perceptual psychology have shown a similar preference for fractal patterns. Taylor, now at the University of Oregon, and perceptual psychologists in Australia and England devised a study using three types of fractal patterns: natural, computer-generated and man-made. Their results were published in *Nature*, March 2001. The survey showed preference 80 percent of the time for fractal dimensions between 1.3 and 1.5, regardless of their origin.

Turning to Theosophical philosophy for help in understanding the underlying cause of this phenomena, we find the following quotation:

> *Mind* is the latent or active potentiality of *Cosmic Ideation*, the essence of every form, the basis of every law, the potency of every principle in the universe. Human thought is the reflection or reproduction in the realm of man's consciousness of these forms, laws, and principles. Hence man senses and apprehends nature just as nature unfolds in him, (*W.Q.J. Articles i*, 29).

It seems reasonable that man would respond, consciously or unconsciously, to repetitious inherent patterns that are universal.

From Around the World

(Translated from their original sources)

From Peru…

ANCIENT AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY

The Associated Press (August 5, 2003) reports that land on the altiplano in Peru which has lain fallow for thousands of years is being reseeded and once again becoming productive. What is more, the "primitive" and antiquated methods utilized in ancient times are being revived. Two decades ago anthropologists, working in conjunction with local Indian communities, began rebuilding the neglected and badly worn earthen mounds, canals and terraces. These simple alterations to the landscape once controlled the water level on the plains that surround Lake Titicaca. Flood control together with water preservation allows for periodic irrigation and combines as an integrated process. Production has increased dramatically. Ancient agricultural technology has proven to be both effective and remarkably inexpensive. For example, records show that in 1983, the water saved in restored canals helped irrigate crops during a severe drought that damaged conventional fields in the area. Three years later, the elevated fields survived heavy flooding that inundated neighboring flatlands.

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

It is very difficult to farm at 12,500 feet above sea level. Even when it can be afforded, the altitude severely punishes conventional farming methods and equipment. The importance of reviving ancient systems is recognized and enthusiastically supported by the struggling farmers in the area. A great deal of evidence for the existence of past civilizations remains in the area. The current population, made up of modern day Indian communities on the Andean altiplano, is relatively sparse compared to what must have lived in the area in the distant past. The plains and terraces that circle Lake Titicaca stretch for many miles, and could have sustained vast populations when their ancient agricultural system was in full swing.

"A LAND OF MYSTERY"

In a feature article, HPB discusses the monumental remains and other evidence that point to a grand past for ancient Central and South America. As the above title signifies, today relatively little is known about the origin of these noble civilizations. The following excerpts are suggestive:

> Lake Titicaca, which occupies the centre of one of the most remarkable terrestrial basins on the whole globe, is 160 miles long and from 50 to 60 miles broad….The surface of the lake is 12,846 feet above the sea, and it is the most elevated body of waters of similar size in the world….The ruins afford every evidence of the highest antiquity….Two distinct styles of architecture are found in these relics of Lake Titicaca. Those of the island of Coati, for instance, bear every feature in common with the ruins of Tiahuanaco….while on some of the islands of the Lake Titicaca there are monuments of great extent, but of true Peruvian type, believed to be the remains of

temples destroyed by the Spaniards. The famous sanctuary, with the human figure in it, belongs to the former. Its doorway 10 feet high, 13 feet broad, with an opening 6 feet 4 inches, by 3 feet 2 inches, is cut from a single stone....Were this temple in India, it would undoubtedly be attributed to Shiva; but it is at the antipodes, where neither the foot of a Shaiva nor one of the Naga tribe has ever penetrated to the knowledge of man. ("A Land of Mystery," *HPB Articles* iii, pp. 421-422.)

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THEOSOPHY — The name theosophy dates from the third century and began with the Eclectic Theosophical system. The primary aim of Eclectic Theosophy was to synthesize religions and ideologies under a common system of ethics, based on eternal truths.

MODERN THEOSOPHY — Modern theosophy has influenced literature, art, music, and film. It introduces philosophical themes into everyday life.

THEOSOPHIST (the·os·o·phist) n. — All real lovers of wisdom and truth have a right to the name "theosophist." Theosophist is a word many mystics have called themselves throughout history. The Neo-platonists of Alexandria were theosophists, as were the mediæval alchemists and cabalists. Also called theosophists were the martinists, the quietists, and various other mystics, whether acting independently or in association with a brotherhood or society.

EGO (ë·go), **EGO** (êg·o) n. — The term Ego (pronounced *ego* as in egg) is a Latin word which represents the immortal "I" in Man. In contrast, ego refers to the personality in its familiar Freudian sense.

MAN (mân), **MANAS** (mâ·nas) n. — In theosophical nomenclature, Man is used in a generic sense and carries no gender. It comes from the common root to think, as does the Sanskrit word *Manas* (the thinking principle in Man).

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