

# FROM "THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY" BY H.P. BLAVATSKY

An Excerpt from Section VIII: ON RE-INCARNATION OR RE-BIRTH (p. 134-142)

## ON INDIVIDUALITY AND PERSONALITY.

ENQUIRER. But what is the difference between the two? I confess that I am still in the dark. Indeed it is just that difference, then, that you cannot impress too much on our minds.

THEOSOPHIST. I try to; but alas, it is harder with some than to make them feel reverence for childish impossibilities, only because they are *orthodox*, and because orthodoxy is respectable. To understand the idea well, you have to first study the dual sets of "principles": the *spiritual*, or those which belong to the imperishable Ego; and the *material*, or those principles which make up the ever-changing bodies or the series of personalities of that Ego. Let us fix permanent names to these, and say that:-

I. *Atma*, the "*Higher Self*," is neither your Spirit nor mine, but like sunlight shines on all. It is the universally diffused "*divine principle*," and is inseparable from its one and absolute *Meta-Spirit*, as the sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight.

II. *Buddhi* (the spiritual soul) is only its vehicle. Neither each separately, nor the two collectively, are of any more use to the body of man, than sunlight and its beams are for a mass of granite buried in the earth, *unless the divine Duad is assimilated by, and reflected in, some consciousness*. Neither *Atma* nor *Buddhi* are ever reached by Karma, because the former is the highest aspect of Karma, *its working agent* of ITSELF in one aspect, and the other is unconscious *on this plane*. This consciousness or mind is,

III. *Manas*, \* the derivation or product in a reflected form of *Ahamkara*, "the conception of I," or EGO-SHIP. It is, therefore, when inseparably united to the first two, called the SPIRITUAL EGO, and *Tajjasi* (the radiant). This is the real Individuality, or the divine man. It is this Ego which - having originally incarnated in the *senseless* human form animated by, but unconscious (since it had no consciousness) of, the presence in itself of the dual monad - made of that human-like form *a real man*. It is that Ego, that "Causal Body," which overshadows every personality Karma forces it to incarnate into; and this Ego which is held responsible for all the sins committed through, and in, every new body or personality - the evanescent masks which hide the true Individual through the long series of rebirths.

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\* MAHAT or the "Universal Mind" is the source of *Manas*. The latter is *Mahat*, *i.e.*, mind, in man. *Manas* is also called *Kshetrajna*, "embodied Spirit," because it is, according to our philosophy, the *Manasa-putras*, or "Sons of the Universal Mind," who *created*, or rather produced, the *thinking* man, "*manu*," by incarnating in the *third Race* mankind in our Round. It is *Manas*, therefore, which is the real incarnating and permanent *Spiritual Ego*, the INDIVIDUALITY, and our various and numberless personalities only its external masks.

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ENQ. But is this just? Why should this EGO receive punishment as the result of deeds which it has forgotten?

THEO. It has not forgotten them; it knows and remembers its misdeeds as well as you remember what you have done yesterday. Is it because the memory of that bundle of physical compounds called "body" does not recollect what its predecessor (the personality *that was*) did, that you imagine that the real Ego has forgotten them? As well say it is unjust that the new boots on the feet of a boy, who is flogged for stealing apples, should be punished for that which they know nothing of.

ENQ. But are there no modes of communication between the Spiritual and human consciousness or memory?

THEO. Of course there are; but they have never been recognised by your scientific modern psychologists. To what do you attribute intuition, the "voice of the conscience," premonitions, vague undefined reminiscences, etc., etc., if not to such communications? Would that the majority of educated men, at least, had the fine spiritual perceptions of Coleridge, who shows how intuitional he is in some of his comments. Hear what he says with respect to the probability that "all thoughts are in themselves imperishable." "If the intelligent faculty (sudden 'revivals' of memory) should be rendered more comprehensive, it would require only a different and appropriate organization, the *body celestial* instead of the *body terrestrial*, to bring before every human soul *the collective experience of its whole past existence (existences, rather)*." And this *body celestial* is our Manasic EGO.

### ON THE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT OF THE EGO.

ENQ. I have heard you say that the *Ego*, whatever the life of the person he incarnated in may have been on Earth, is never visited with *post-mortem* punishment.

THEO. Never, save in very exceptional and rare cases of which we will not speak here, as the nature of the "punishment" in no way approaches any of your theological conceptions of damnation.

ENQ. But if it is punished in this life for the misdeeds committed in a previous one, then it is this Ego that ought to be rewarded also, whether here, or when disincarnated.

THEO. And so it is. If we do not admit of any punishment outside of this earth, it is because the only state the Spiritual Self knows of, hereafter, is that of unalloyed bliss.

ENQ. What do you mean?

THEO. Simply this: *crimes and sins committed on a plane of objectivity and in a world of matter, cannot receive punishment in a world of pure subjectivity*. We believe in no hell or paradise as localities; in no objective hell-fires and worms that never die, nor in any Jerusalems with streets paved with sapphires and diamonds. What we believe in is a *post-mortem state* or mental condition, such as we are in during a vivid dream. We believe in an

immutable law of absolute Love, Justice, and Mercy. And believing in it, we say: "Whatever the sin and dire results of the original Karmic transgression of the now incarnated Egos\* no man (or the outer material and periodical form of the Spiritual Entity) can be held, with any degree of justice, responsible for the consequences of his birth. He does not ask to be born, nor can he choose the parents that will give him life. In every respect he is a victim to his environment, the child of circumstances over which he has no control; and if each of his transgressions were impartially investigated, there would be found nine out of every ten cases when he was the one sinned against, rather than the sinner. Life is at best a heartless play, a stormy sea to cross, and a heavy burden often too difficult to bear. The greatest philosophers have tried in vain to fathom and find out its *raison d'être*, and have all failed except those who had the key to it, namely, the Eastern sages. Life is, as Shakespeare describes it: -

". . . . but a walking shadow - a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing . . . ."

Nothing in its separate parts, yet of the greatest importance in its collectivity or series of lives. At any rate, almost every individual life is, in its full development, a sorrow. And are we to believe that poor, helpless man, after being tossed about like a piece of rotten timber on the angry billows of life, is, if he proves too weak to resist them, to be punished by a *sempiternity* of damnation, or even a temporary punishment? Never! Whether a great or an average sinner, good or bad, guilty or innocent, once delivered of the burden of physical life, the tired and worn-out *Manu* ("thinking Ego") has won the right to a period of absolute rest and bliss. The same unerringly wise and just rather than merciful Law, which inflicts upon the incarnated Ego the Karmic punishment for every sin committed during the preceding life on Earth, provides for the now disembodied Entity a long lease of mental rest, i.e., the entire oblivion of every sad event, aye, to the smallest painful thought, that took place in its last life as a personality, leaving in the soul-memory but the reminiscence of that which was bliss, or led to happiness. Plotinus, who said that our body was the true river of Lethe, for "souls plunged into it forget all," meant more than he said. For, as our terrestrial body is like Lethe, so is our *celestial body* in Devachan, and much more.

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\* It is on this transgression that the cruel and illogical dogma of the Fallen Angels has been built. It is explained in Vol. II. of the *Secret Doctrine*. All our "Egos" are thinking and rational entities (*Manasa-putras*) who had lived, whether under human or other forms, in the precedent *life-cycle* (Manvantara), and whose Karma it was to incarnate in the *man* of this one. It was taught in the MYSTERIES that, having delayed to comply with this law (or having "refused to create" as Hinduism says of the *Kumaras* and Christian legend of the Archangel Michael), i.e., having failed to incarnate in due time, the bodies predestined for them got defiled (Vide Stanzas VIII. and IX. in the "Slokas of Dzyan," Vol. II. *Secret Doctrine*, pp. 19 and 20), hence the original sin of the senseless forms and the punishment of

the *Egos*. That which is meant by the rebellious angels being hurled down into Hell is simply explained by these pure Spirits or Egos being imprisoned in bodies of unclean matter, flesh.

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ENQ. Then am I to understand that the murderer, the transgressor of law divine and human in every shape, is allowed to go unpunished?

THEO. Who ever said that? Our philosophy has a doctrine of punishment as stern as that of the most rigid Calvinist, only far more philosophical and consistent with absolute justice. No deed, not even a sinful thought, will go unpunished; the latter more severely even than the former, as a thought is far more potential in creating evil results than even a deed.\* We believe in an unerring law of Retribution, called KARMA, which asserts itself in a natural concatenation of causes and their unavoidable results.

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\* "Verily, I say unto you, that whosoever looketh at a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matt. v., 28.)

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ENQ. And how, or where, does it act?

THEO. Every labourer is worthy of his hire, saith Wisdom in the Gospel; every action, good or bad, is a prolific parent, saith the Wisdom of the Ages. Put the two together, and you will find the "why." After allowing the Soul, escaped from the pangs of personal life, a sufficient, aye, a hundredfold compensation, Karma, with its army of Skandhas, waits at the threshold of Devachan, whence the *Ego* re-emerges to assume a new incarnation. It is at this moment that the future destiny of the now-rested Ego trembles in the scales of just Retribution, as *it* now falls once again under the sway of active Karmic law. It is in this rebirth which is ready for *it*, a rebirth selected and prepared by this mysterious, inexorable, but in the equity and wisdom of its decrees infallible LAW, that the sins of the previous life of the Ego are punished. Only it is into no imaginary Hell, with theatrical flames and ridiculous tailed and horned devils, that the Ego is cast, but verily on to this earth, the plane and region of his sins, where he will have to atone for every bad thought and deed. As he has sown, so will he reap. Reincarnation will gather around him all those other Egos who have suffered, whether directly or indirectly, at the hands, or even through the unconscious instrumentality, of the past *personality*. They will be thrown by Nemesis in the way of the *new* man, concealing the *old*, the eternal EGO, and . . . .

ENQ. But where is the equity you speak of, since these new "personalities" are not aware of having sinned or been sinned against?

THEO. Has the coat torn to shreds from the back of the man who stole it, by another man who was robbed of it and recognises his property, to be regarded as fairly dealt with? The new "personality" is no better than a fresh suit of clothes with its specific characteristics, colour, form and qualities; but the *real* man who wears it is the same culprit as of old. It is

the *individuality* who suffers through his "personality." And it is this, and this alone, that can account for the terrible, still only *apparent*, injustice in the distribution of lots in life to man. When your modern philosophers will have succeeded in showing to us a good reason, why so many apparently innocent and good men are born only to suffer during a whole life-time; why so many are born poor unto starvation in the slums of great cities, abandoned by fate and men; why, while these are born in the gutter, others open their eyes to light in palaces; while a noble birth and fortune seem often given to the worst of men and only rarely to the worthy; while there are beggars whose *inner* selves are peers to the highest and noblest of men; when this, and much more, is satisfactorily explained by either your philosophers or theologians, then only, but not till then, you will have the right to reject the theory of reincarnation. The highest and grandest of poets have dimly perceived this truth of truths. Shelley believed in it, Shakespeare must have thought of it when writing on the worthlessness of Birth. Remember his words:

"Why should my birth keep down my mounting spirit?  
Are not all creatures subject unto time?  
There's legions now of beggars on the earth,  
That their original did spring from Kings,  
And many monarchs now, whose fathers were  
The riff-raff of their age . . . . ."

Alter the word "fathers" into "Egos" - and you will have the truth.

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## DEVOTIONAL READING

From "Notes on the Bhagavad Gita" by William Q. Judge

Chapter 7, p. 141-142, 143-144

Man, made of thought, occupant only of many bodies from time to time, is eternally thinking. His chains are through thought, his release due to nothing else. His mind is immediately tinted or altered by whatever object it is directed to. By this means the soul is enmeshed in the same thought or series of thoughts as is the mind. If the object be anything that is distinct from the Supreme Self then the mind is at once turned into that, becomes that, is tinted like that. This is one of the natural capacities of the mind. It is naturally clear and uncolored, as we would see if we were able to find one that had not gone through too many experiences. It is moveable and quick, having a disposition to bound from one point to another. Several words would describe it. Chameleon-like it changes color, sponge-like it absorbs that to which it is applied, sieve-like it at once loses its former color and shape the moment a different object is taken up. Thus, full of joy from an appropriate cause, it may suddenly become gloomy or morose upon the approach of that which is sorrowful or gloomy. We can therefore say it becomes that to which it is devoted.

. . . those who worship or believe in the Self as all-in-all, not separate from any, supreme, the container, the whole, go to It, and, becoming It, know all because of its knowledge, and cease to be subject to change because It is changeless. This also is law, and not sentiment.

The chapter [i.e. Chapter 7 of the Bhagavad Gita] concludes by showing how the ignorant who believe in a Supreme Being with a form, fall into error and darkness at the time of their birth because of the hold which former life-recollections have upon the mind. This includes the power of the Skandhas or aggregates of sensations and desires accumulated in prior lives. At birth these, being a natural part of us, rush to us and we to them, so that a new union is made for another lifetime. In the other life, not having viewed the Self as all and in all, and having worshipped many Gods, the sensations of liking and disliking are so strong that the darkness of rebirth is irresistible. But the wise man died out of his former life with a full knowledge of the Self at the hour of death, and thus prevented the imprinting upon his nature of a set of sensations and desires that would otherwise, upon reincarnation, lead him into error.

This is the chapter on Unity, teaching that the Self is all, or if you like the word better, God: that God is all and not outside of nature, and that we must recognize this great unity of all things and beings in the Self.