

# Aspects of Divine Law

by Geoffrey Farthing

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## INTRODUCTION

Most of what follows is extracted from the writings of H.P. Blavatsky. It has been said that these writings constitute a quarry from which generations of students can extract treasures of information concerning the truths of existence. What follows has been taken from these writings by the use of indexes, and the numerous extracts classified very roughly according to aspect.

The story is a vast one. The universe manifests dynamism in all its operations and these operations apparently exhibit order. Whatever chaos there may have been in the remote beginnings of things now manifests this order as harmony and equilibrium. Were this not so the whole cosmic scene would be chaotic and self-destructive whereas it is self-preserving as is evidenced by its very existence after countless millions of years.

What applies to the whole applies to the parts and our earth is such a part; for us humans living on it is a very significant part. It is our home. It too manifests in all its natural processes the harmony of the whole. We see these in its cyclical activities: the rhythmic changes of the seasons, the processes of growth from seed to flower and seed again, in birth, adolescence, maturity and death. We are also aware of the orbital journey of our earth round the sun in relationship to the movements of the other planets of our system and the awesome immensity of the map of heaven.

It is perhaps too facile to say that these planetary movements are governed by gravity. The whole process is a happy resolution of many complex forces which somehow or other are made to support the relatively stable but ever-changing grand scheme of existence.

We notice in all the activities of the countless forms of Nature this same harmonizing stability. In general everything has the opportunity to fulfil whatever function it was designed for in the overall scheme of things.

This overall ordering of the vast variety of life forms which constitute a) our planet and b) the universe that we know of can be regarded as government by law. It is the law to which the activity of everything has to subscribe willy nilly or disaster follows. The law maintains the equilibrium or balance, at least for a time, be that time very short or very long.

Another aspect of Nature, and this becomes apparent to the student of Esoteric Science, Occultism or Theosophy, is that Nature comprises everything, not only at physical level but at inner subjective levels as well. These inner levels reflect into us human beings by way of our thoughts and feelings, our aspirations, our ecstasies, in fact the whole gamut of our emotions. These are all within the ambit of Nature's processes and, in terms of their vehicles, they are the structures which constitute the parts of her make-up.

All things in Nature and in the Cosmos, it is said, manifest life. This life is whole and homogeneous throughout the piece. The same life manifests through all things in their infinite diversity. It is the

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dynamism of the whole, with its infinity of cyclical, periodical movement, as, for example, a clock spring provides the energy for the eventual movement of the hands on the face. Time is told, so to speak, by movement and the whole process or nature of our earth is movement inherent in it by way of the dynamism of this One life.

According to the great science of Occultism this One Life is the seat or source of consciousness. Just as the One Life manifests in everything in existence by way of its inherent dynamism, so every thing in its degree is endowed with consciousness.

The building blocks of things in existence are the infinitely small lives of which everything is composed. They aggregate and diversify in form and function by specialization and are the basis for the characteristics of every living thing, enabling it to function in the sphere to which it is allotted. In man this aggregation results in his overall consciousness, all his faculties and his physical constitution.

This intelligence informing all creation is inherent in it. It is by reason of the aggregate of the accumulated learning of all the lives comprising Nature that it comes to 'know' the 'rules' of existence. It has learned what to do and what not to do. In other words, paths of action have been worked out, delineated and adopted as the result of countless ages of experience. These paths of action in the aggregate constitute the governing factors in the whole natural process. These governing factors, it must be noted, stem from the within to the without and, if we ascribe to the within at its high levels Divinity or Deity, that is the nature of the original governing impulse. There is a saying in Occultism that Deity is Law and Law is Deity. By reason of its very nature this law in all manifested existence at any time is inexorable and omnipotent at all levels of being. By way of it everything is as it is, and it is by reason of what went before. In other words it is the law of cause and effect.

These aggregated entities comprising greater or lesser numbers of constituent lives not only have consciousness but, according to Esoteric Science, are endowed with memory. Consciousness and memory are the basis of intelligence. By reason of memory they are conditioned by experience and can therefore learn. The learning process modifies them, hence their growth and development. Modifications to the inner elements of their being are reflected or projected into modifications in the objective, physical world of forms. It is in this sense that the forms of living things are said to be possessed of memory.

There is a tenet in Esotericism that all these aggregated lives comprise hierarchies of beings at all stages of development from the lowest to the highest. At the lowest level they are referred to as Elementals but they are still possessed of sentience and memory which, as in the case of all other forms, conditions them to fulfil a characteristic function in the scheme of things. This sentience-cum-memory is the basis of instinct. All forms in the kingdoms of Nature up to man manifest this inbuilt instinct. It can be said that they do what they are.

The learning process translates eventually into intelligence, the degree of which varies according to the development of the form manifesting it. In man this intelligence factor becomes very significant. At a stage in his development it becomes Mind. The teaching here makes the significant statement that our present humanity did not develop mind by this slow evolutionary process but developed an otherwise latent mental faculty sufficiently to enable more progressive entities who had developed mind in previous

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world cycles to endow nascent humanity with the mind faculty.

The hierarchies of beings move up in the scale of evolutionary development from the elemental into the mineral, vegetable, animal and ultimately the human kingdoms that we are familiar with at our physical level of existence. The teaching has it, however, that this evolutionary development proceeds on after the man stage into super-human stages where there are numerous hierarchies of beings of various grades of intelligence and power from those immediately post-human to the very exalted magnificent beings who play the parts in the grand evolutionary process of what we might regard as gods. They are the supreme intelligences controlling all the intelligences beneath them. In this scale of things the lowest are the Elementals which operate on all planes of being and are the effective agents of all action. The Great Beings, the Planetary Spirits as they are called, in some classifications Archangels, are each of them a collective being consisting of lesser beings who themselves have reached exalted states of knowledge and power.

It is the aggregate intelligence not only of these Great Beings but of all others on the total ladder of life that impress upon all the forces of Nature (the Elementals) their proper course of action. This proper course constitutes the Universal or Divine Law, and it applies in every detail from the highest to the lowest of everything in manifestation. As we shall see in the extracts which follow, because of its inherent intelligent nature, this Law has a moral aspect. This means that, in the case of man who is responsible for his actions and even thoughts, his intentions and motives determine the Karmic effects of what he does.

But it is the law of cause only by reason of action. All actions as causes produce effects. We have said that the law operates at all levels, including the inner subjective ones of emotion and mind, whereon it also works.

Most things, plants and animals in Nature behave according to their characteristic natures; they have no intent or purpose other than to do what they are naturally fitted to do. For them therefore the effects of what they do are purely mechanical and no blame attaches to them. The situation is different for human beings. Their motives for actions are very complex. They can be benevolent or malevolent, selfish or altruistic, and according to their motive will be the result of their actions.

In Eastern scriptures this divine law is known as Karma and that which things do by way of their nature is known as their Dharma. Man's Dharma therefore should be to act as a human being. Many human beings at our stage of evolutionary development are, however, still motivated by animalistic urges. They do not fulfil their Dharma as properly developed human beings; so, failing in that, they incur the workings of the law of Karma.

Eventually by suffering and the processes of the development of proper human faculties and their use man will learn how to live his life as a human being. This learning process is long and leads him into difficulties and distress along the way. His Karmic destiny is, however, to become a fully-fledged human being manifesting only the proper human characteristics. According to the teachings this is the road leading to the perfectability of man. It is the goal eventually for all of us; the law is a vast educative process. We are not, however, bound to it for ever; the 'personal' man ripens, so to speak, and becomes

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the spiritualized man, fitting himself to occupy the next level on the stupendous ladder of existence.

Such are the workings of the Law, often referred to as “the good law”.

There is an apt passage in a letter from one of H.P.B.’s Teachers:

Teach the people to see that life on this earth, even the happiest, is but a burden and an illusion, that it is but our own *Karma*, the cause producing the effect, that is our own judge, our Saviour in future lives, and the great struggle for life will soon lose its intensity.

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Regarding the text of this work, as it is entirely based on quotations taken out of their contexts in the original works, the result is disconnected. It is hoped, however, that what is presented will be regarded as nuggets of information which, taken together, will constitute a comprehensive and valuable view of the vast subject of Divine Law.

In some of the extracts the cosmic planes and the principles of man are given numbers, e.g. mind (or manas) is the fifth. The classification of the planes and corresponding principles, together with the numeration, is used consistently throughout the original literature (see table at end).

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<b>REFERENCES</b>		
1	I.U.	ISIS UNVEILED, Vols I and II, all editions same pagination
2	S.D.	THE SECRET DOCTRINE, Vols I, II and III, Original Edition and C.W. series [Vol III is 1897 ed. or in C.W.XII]
3	C.W.	THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF H.P. BLAVATSKY, 14 Vols, edited by Boris de Zirkoff
4	KEY	THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY, Original Edition
5	MLC	THE MAHATMA LETTERS TO A.P.SINNETT, Chronological Edition [Same content but different pagination in 2nd and 3rd Editions]

## 1. IN THE BEGINNING

To start an essay on the nature of Karma and its ramifications necessarily involves a look at the very beginnings of things, at least as far as our earth is concerned. In the Introduction we mentioned the importance of the idea of the One Life manifesting in all lives. Associated with that One Life, it is said, there is a class of entities known as the Lipikas described in *The Secret Doctrine* as “Scribes” :

... these Divine Beings are connected with Karma, the Law of Retribution, for they are the Recorders or Annalists who impress on the (to us) invisible tablets of the Astral Light - “the great picture gallery of eternity” - a faithful record of every act, and even thought, of man, of all that was, is, or every will be, in the phenomenal Universe.... this divine and unseen canvas is the BOOK OF LIFE. As it is the Lipikas who project into objectivity from the passive Universal Mind the ideal plan of the universe, upon which the “Builders” reconstruct the Kosmos after every Pralaya, it is they who stand parallel to the Seven Angels of the Presence, whom the Christians recognize in the Seven “Planetary Spirits” or the “Spirits of the Stars”; for thus it is they who are the direct amanuenses of the Eternal Ideation - or, as called by Plato, the “Divine Thought”.

[S.D.I, 104]

And so we start our story with an account of how these Divine Beings, the Lipikas, impress the content of Divine Ideation - conditioned by previous eternities of existent things - upon the nascent matter of a new Cosmos or Universe, which of course includes our earth. All that will be is conditioned by these antecedents through the agency of the Lipikas.

Later there is the following:

The ONE LIFE is closely related to *the one* law which governs the World of Being - KARMA. Exoterically, this is simply and literally “action”, or rather an “effect-producing cause”. Esoterically it is quite a different thing in its far-fetching moral effects. It is the unerring LAW OF RETRIBUTION. To say to those ignorant of the real significance, characteristics and awful importance of this eternal immutable law, that no theological definition of a personal deity can give an idea of this impersonal, yet ever present and active Principle, is to speak in vain. Nor can it be called Providence.

[S.D.I, 634]

This last extract ends with a reference to ‘Divine Providence’ which in some quarters is regarded as “tempering His blessings to secure better effects.” The quotation ends with “which Karma - a sexless principle - does not.”

Quoting again:

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... at the first flutter of renascent life, Svabhabat, “the mutable radiance of the Immutable darkness unconscious in Eternity”, passes, at every new rebirth of Kosmos, from an inactive state into one of intense activity; that it differentiates, and then begins its work through that differentiation. This work is KARMA.

[S.D.I, 634-5]

After a brief dissertation on the processes of ‘creation’ a passage concludes to the effect that these processes:

... are the direct reflex of the One Light, yet men are far removed from these, since the whole of the *visible* Kosmos consists of “*self-produced* beings, the creatures of *Karma*”.

[S.D.I, 635]

This is followed by a statement to the effect that:

... only “two things are (objectively) eternal, namely *Akasa* and *Nirvana*”; and that these are ONE in reality, and but a *maya* when divided.

[S.D.I, 635]

A close study of the information given us in the S.D. reveals that Maya - and Karma - constitute the mechanism of evolution and that that evolution as it applies to spiritual man as Egoic or Divine Self is the sole purpose of the whole process, at least as far as our immediate Cosmos, and in particular our Earth, is concerned.

Later, still regarding Karma, there is the statement:

There are “Cycles of Matter” and there are “Cycles of Spiritual Evolution”. Racial, national, and individual cycles.

[S.D.I, 638]

In this surely we see two important things: one is the material and spiritual aspects of the Law and the other is that in its cycles everything is included.

The working of the cause and effect aspect of the Law necessarily involves the fact that what is now is the result of the past and what is to come will be the result of what happens now. There is a passage which reads:

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There *is* a predestination in the geological life of our globe, as in the history, past and future, of races and nations. This is closely connected with what we call *Karma* ...

[S.D.I, 641]

There is an interesting reiteration of a statement that has been made before, to the effect that:

“The revolution of the physical world, according to the ancient doctrine, is attended by a like revolution in the world of intellect - the spiritual evolution of the world proceeding in cycles, like the physical one.

Thus we see in history a regular alternation of ebb and flow in the tide of human progress. The great kingdoms and empires of the world, after reaching the culmination of their greatness, descend again, in accordance with the same law by which they ascended; till, having reached the lowest point, humanity reasserts itself and mounts up once more, the height of its attainment being, by this law of ascending progression by cycles, somewhat higher than the point from which it had descended before.” (from I.U.I, 34)

But these cycles - wheels within wheels, so comprehensively and ingeniously symbolized by the various Manus and Rishis in India ... *do not affect all mankind at one and the same time* ... Hence, as we see, the difficulty of comprehending and discriminating between them with regard to their physical and spiritual effects, without having thoroughly mastered their relations with, and action upon, the respective positions of nations and races, in their destiny and evolution. This system cannot be comprehended if the spiritual action of these periods - *preordained*, so to say, by Karmic law - is separated from their physical course....

[S.D.I, 641]

## 2. THE LAW ITSELF

We start this section with a splendid description of Karma and how it works.

Karma thus, is simply *action*, a concatenation of *causes* and *effects*. That which adjusts each effect to its direct cause; that which guides invisibly and as unerringly these effects to choose, as the field of their operation, the *right person in the right place*, is what we call *Karmic Law*.... in the active laws of Karma - *absolute Equity* - based on the Universal Harmony, there is neither foresight nor desire; and because again, it is our own actions, thoughts, and deeds which *guide that law*, instead of being guided by it.

[C.W.XI, 144-5]

It is not the impersonal law of Karma which creates causes, it is the actions of living things and in particular the actions of responsible man who creates them. Karma is the adjuster of effects.

It is not the absolute that creates Karma, but the finite and sentient being evolved out of it, or the visible projection of a finite portion of this absolute. In other words, it is man, or matter in its highest state of perfection on earth - matter plus Brahm or the absolute.

[C.W.IV, 194]

There was also a universal belief from early times in rulers, gods, of the four cardinal points, or the corresponding cosmical forces, of space (with respect to our earth). They had various names among which were Rector and Maharaja.

It is not the "Rector" or "Maharaja" who punishes or rewards, with or without "God's" permission or order, but man himself - his deeds or Karma, attracting individually and collectively (as in the case of whole nations sometimes) every kind of evil and calamity. We produce CAUSES, and then awaken the corresponding powers in the sidereal world; which powers are magnetically and irresistibly attracted to - and react upon - those who produced those causes; whether such persons are practically the evil-doers, or simply thinkers who brood mischief.

[S.D.I, 124]

In the Christian scriptures (Corinthians vi,7) it says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap". Karma puts it thus:

We firmly believe, in the actuality, and the philosophical necessity of "Karma", i.e., in that law of unavoidable retribution, the not-to-be diverted effect of every cause produced by us, reward as punishment in strict conformity with our actions;...

[C.W.IV, 499]

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In a number of places H.P.B. points out false teaching in other religions, particularly in Christianity where, in spite of the above quotation from Corinthians, its doctrines teach the forgiveness of sins whereby a man feels himself relieved of his responsibility for the consequences of his acts.

Instead of bettering morality Christianity but adds to the natural human vices, owing to the doctrine of atonement and salvation by prayer, instead of that of self-reliance and Karma.

[C.W.V, 123]

It is generally appreciated that the law of Karma has a series of aspects. For example, it maintains the equilibrium and harmony of the operations of Nature. This is generally accepted as the law of cause and effect. Under that aspect of the law things are as they are as a result of their antecedents (what went before). On the other hand H.P.B. has on occasions pointed out that there is a moral aspect to this law under which motive is as important as an act itself in terms of its effects. In the following quotation a distinction is made between the law of Karma as a moral law and that of the law of cause and effect:

It is generally supposed that animals are not under the operation of the law of Karma as applied to human beings....

The error often committed is to mistake the general law of cause and effect for the law of merit and demerit....

The law of Karma is a moral law, and where no moral responsibility exists, there can be no application of the law of karma; but the law of cause and effect applies to all departments of nature.

[C.W.VI, 236]

We are seeing that Universal Law underlies all the activities of Cosmos. Nevertheless, however it is regarded, the law of Karma is an integral part of that universal process with its endless cycles, including those of birth and death.

For the latter [Karma] is the very corner-stone of Esoteric philosophy ... it is the grand and one pillar on which hangs the whole philosophy of rebirths, and once the latter is denied, the whole doctrine of karma falls into meaningless verbiage.

[C.W.VII, 177]

That is followed by:

The law of retribution as Karma, awaits man at the threshold of his new incarnation.

[C.W.VII, 180]

Our responsibility for creating our Karma is constantly reiterated:

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[Theosophists] preach against every dogmatic and infallible religion and recognize no other deity, which dispenses suffering and recompense, than Karma, an arbiter created by their own actions.

[C.W.VIII, 80]

The following quotation could imply that Karma fixes a man's life span by allotting the amount of energy he can expend during that life:

The amount of Kinetic energy to be expended during life by one particular set of physiological cells is allotted by Karma - another aspect of the Universal Principle ...

[C.W.IX, 76 fn]

H.P.B. tells us in many places that it is possible for unworthy people to obtain the secrets of Nature and to use this knowledge selfishly. She regards this as black magic.

And, although it is the intention that decides primarily whether white or black magic is exercised, yet the results even of involuntary, unconscious sorcery cannot fail to be productive of bad Karma. Enough has been said to show that *sorcery is any kind of evil influence exercised upon other persons, who suffer, or make other persons suffer, in consequence*. Karma is a heavy stone splashed in the quiet waters of Life; and it must produce ever widening circles of ripples, carried wider and wider, almost ad infinitum. Such causes produced have to call forth effects, and these are evidenced in the just laws of Retribution.

[C.W.IX, 259]

Karma is ever working, even in the periods between personal lives. The characteristic effect of deeds, thoughts, etc., are transmitted to the next personality via Elementals (or Life Atoms) .

KARMA, TANHA and SKANDHAS, are the almighty trinity in one, and the cause of our re-birth.... it is its KARMA that guides the idiosyncracies and prominent moral traits of the *old* "personality" that was (and that the EGO knew not how to control), to reappear in the *new* man that will be. These traits and passions pursue and fasten on the yet plastic third and fourth principles of the child, and - unless the EGO struggles and conquers - they will develop with tenfold intensity and lead the adult man to his destruction. For it is they who are the tools and weapons of the Karmic law of retribution.

[C.W.X, 176]

The importance of motive for our actions is repeatedly stressed:

... in ordinary human law, an assault is more severely punished than the thought or intention, i.e., the threat, whereas Karmically it is the contrary.

[C.W.X, 399]

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Nothing in the manifest Universe lasts for ever and this applies to circumstances in life and to the after-death states of being, as well as to all existent things.

Here we positively refuse to accept the cruel and unphilosophical belief in eternal reward or eternal punishment.

[Key, 110]

Concerning the operation of Karma, whilst this is ultimately in the realms of mystery, there is the following:

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*.

[Key, 135]

In the extracts we have made so far there is a considerable amount of reiteration of content but each extract adds a little more colour to our forming ideas.

...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 the unerring law of Retribution, called KARMA, which asserts itself in a natural concatenation of causes and their unavoidable results.

[Key, 140]

The operations of the Cosmos (on whatever scale we conceive it) constitute a process, and this process is orderly.

What we believe in is strict and impartial justice. Our idea of the unknown Universal Deity, represented by Karma, is that it is a Power which cannot fail, and can therefore, have neither wrath nor mercy, only absolute Equity, which leaves every cause, great or small, to work out its inevitable effects.

[Key, 199]

The following extracts are a selection only from a whole section in *The Key* on "What is Karma?" Readers are referred to the original; it is particularly rich in application to the human situation.

ENQ. But what is Karma?

In answer we have one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the Law:

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THEO. As I have said, we consider it as the *Ultimate Law* of the Universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, *Karma* is that unseen and unknown law *which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably* each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself *unknowable*, its action is perceivable....

ENQ. Then it is the “Absolute”, the Unknowable again, and is not of much value as an explanation of the problems of life?

THEO. On the contrary. For though we do not know what Karma is *per se*, and in its essence, we *do* know how it works, and we can define and describe its mode of action with accuracy. We only do *not* know its ultimate *Cause*, just as modern philosophy universally admits that the *ultimate Cause* of anything is “unknowable”.

[Key, 201]

THEO. ... according to our teaching all these great social evils, the distinction of classes in Society, and of the sexes in the affairs of life, the unequal distribution of capital and of labour - all are due to what we tersely but truly denominate KARMA.

ENQ. But, surely, all these evils which seem to fall upon the masses somewhat indiscriminately are not actual merited and INDIVIDUAL Karma?

THEO. No. they cannot be so strictly defined in their effects as to show that each individual environment, and the particular conditions of life in which each person finds himself, are nothing more than retributive Karma which the individual generated in a previous life. We must not lose sight of the fact that every atom is subject to the general law governing the whole body to which it belongs, and here we come upon the wider track of the Karmic law. Do you not perceive that the aggregate of individual Karma becomes that of the nation to which those individuals belong, and further, that the sum total of National Karma is that of the World? The evils that you speak of are not peculiar to the individual or even to the Nation, they are more or less universal; and it is upon this broad line of Human interdependence that the law of Karma finds its legitimate and equable issue.

ENQ. Do I, then, understand that the law of Karma is not necessarily an individual law?

THEO. That is just what I mean. It is impossible that Karma could readjust the balance of power in the world's life and progress unless it had a broad and general line of action. It is held as a truth among Theosophists that the interdependence of Humanity is the cause of what is called Distributive Karma, and it is this law which affords the solution to the great question of collective suffering and its relief. It is an occult law, moreover, that no man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the

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same way, no one can sin, nor suffer the effects of sin, alone. In reality, there is no such thing as “Separateness”; and the nearest approach to that selfish state, which the laws of life permit, is in the intent or motive.

ENQ. And are there no means by which the distributive or national Karma might be concentrated or collected, so to speak, and brought to its natural and legitimate fulfilment without all this protracted suffering?

THEO. As a general rule, and within certain limits which define the age to which we belong, the law of Karma cannot be hastened or retarded in its fulfilment. But of this I am certain, the point of possibility in either of these directions has never yet been touched. Listen to the following recital of one phase of national suffering, and then ask yourself whether, admitting the working power of individual, relative, and distributive Karma, these evils are not capable of extensive modification and general relief. What I am about to read to you is from the pen of a National Saviour, one who, having overcome Self, and being free to choose, has elected to serve Humanity, in bearing at least as much as a woman’s shoulders can possibly bear of National Karma.

[Key, 202-4]

THEO. Europeans have got so much into the ingrained habit of considering right and wrong, good and evil, as matters of an arbitrary code of law laid down either by men, or imposed upon them by a Personal God. We Theosophists, however, say that “Good” and “Harmony”, and “Evil” and “Disharmony”, are synonymous. Further we maintain that all pain and suffering are results of want of Harmony, and that the one terrible and only cause of the disturbance of Harmony is *selfishness* in some form or another. Hence Karma gives back to every man the *actual consequences* of his own actions, without any regard to their moral character; but since he receives his due for *all*, it is obvious that he will be made to atone for all sufferings which he has caused, just as he will reap in joy and gladness the fruits of all the happiness and harmony he had helped to produce. I can do no better than quote for your benefit certain passages from books and articles written by our Theosophists - those who have a correct idea of Karma.

[Key, 206-7]

H.P.B. quotes a number of other people’s writings on Karma, one of which discusses the views of religion vis-à-vis the provisions of the Law as given in Esotericism. She selects some verses from Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia* (pp 140-143).

Before beginning, and without an end,  
As space eternal and as surety sure,  
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,  
Only its laws endure

.....

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It will not be contemned of anyone;  
Who thwarts it loses, and who serves it gains;  
The hidden good it pays with peace and bliss  
The hidden ill with pains.

It seeth everywhere and marketh all:  
Do right - it recompenseth! Do one wrong -  
The equal retribution must be made,  
Though Dharma tarry long.

It knows not wrath nor pardon, utter-true  
Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs;  
Times are as naught, tomorrow it will judge,  
Or after many days.

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.

[Quoted, Key 214-5]

One of the prime tenets of the Ancient Wisdom is Unity. Unity is used in the special sense of the Universe, as all existence, being one thing, not a collection of things put together. The implications of this statement are not immediately obvious and some of them may be very hard to accept. They are rendered more comprehensible by a conception of the "one thing" as the very essence of everything. The idea is closely related to that of the "one life" which is manifest in the multitudes of "lives" which comprise the Cosmos. "Everything is a life or an aggregate of lives". In terms of this "essence" man and Nature are one. By the Law what affects one will affect the other. Hence the vital importance of ecology, man's responsibility for his environment. This idea expands not only to environment but to the circumstances of our lives and even our climate. Man cannot escape the consequences, the effects, of his acts.

After a dissertation on the influence of the sun, the moon and the planets, on the periodicity of our system, in the text referred to as the behaviour of Nature, there is an explanatory passage concerning the metaphysical numbers involved, which refer to the sevenfold nature of the cosmic plan. It also refers to the astronomical spheres of our system as follows:

The spheres of action of the combined Forces of Evolution and Karma are (1) the super-spiritual

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or noumenal; (2) the Spiritual; (3) the Psychic; (4) the Astro-ethereal; (5) the Sub-astral; (6) the Vital; and (7) the purely *physical* spheres.

[S.D.II, 621fn]

The 'spheres' here refer to the cosmic planes with their reflection into the principles of man (see Table at end).

Sometimes H.P.B. applies the general laws of Karma to very specific cases; for example, the following extracts tell about Karma and abortion, and as it relates to plants. There is an interesting passage reminding us that Karma applies in the Kingdoms of Nature as follows:

... I must all the more remind you that there may well be other spiritual laws, operating on plants and animals as well as on mankind ...

We call them Karmic laws ...

[Key, 46]

It is interesting to note here that the Dhyān-Chohans, in other places referred to as Planetary Spirits of post-human levels of evolutionary development, control the Elementals who are their direct agents in the processes of the plant kingdom.

And here is the explanation of the curious fact ... that each plant has its Karma and that its growth is the result of Karma. This Karma proceeds from the lower Dhyān-Chohans who trace out and plan the growth of the tree.

[C.W.X, 363]

The crime [of abortion] lies precisely in the willful and sinful destruction of life, and interference with the operations of nature, hence - with KARMA - that of the mother and the would-be future human being.

[C.W.V, 107]

It has sometimes been said that there will always be the 'poor' and that there simply is not enough of food and other natural resources to supply the ever-increasing populations of the earth. Hear what H.P.B. says:

When every individual has contributed to the general good what he can of money, of labour, and of ennobling thought, then, and only then, will the balance of National Karma be struck, and until then we have no right nor any reasons for saying that there is more life on the earth than Nature can support. It is reserved for the heroic souls, the Saviours of our Race and Nation, to find out the cause of this unequal pressure of retributive Karma, and by a supreme effort to readjust the balance of power, and save the people from a moral engulfment a thousand times more disastrous

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and more permanently evil than the like physical catastrophe, in which you seem to see the only possible outlet for this accumulated misery....

We describe Karma as that Law of readjustment which ever tends to restore disturbed equilibrium in the physical and broken harmony in the moral world. We say that Karma does not act in this or that particular way always; but that it always *does* act so as to restore Harmony and preserve the balance of equilibrium, in virtue of which the Universe exists.

[Key, 205-6]

Questions are often asked as to why "God" allows the devastating catastrophes of Nature, e.g, hurricanes, erupting volcanoes, floods, etc., with their attendant loss of life, subsequent famines, disease and so on. A rather surprising answer is given:

... the laws that govern our "Occult World"... *do* seem very often unjust, even at times cruel. But this is due to the fact that they were never meant either for the immediate redress of wrongs, or the direct help of those who offer at random their allegiance to legislators. Still, the seemingly real, the evanescent and quick passing evils they bring about are necessary to the growth, progress and final establishment of your small Th. Society as those cataclysms in nature, which often decimate whole populations, are necessary to mankind. An earthquake may, for all the world knows, be a bliss and a tidal wave prove salvation to the many at the expense of the few.

[MLC 134, 440]

### 3. HUMANITY AS A WHOLE

The Law in its universal sense is the operational direction given to the whole scheme of Nature. As far as our Earth is concerned this is described in some detail in *The Secret Doctrine*. Our objective planet and all on it comes into manifestation and endures during enormous periods of time, by stages. The most rudimentary forces, or energies, and forms come first; they constitute three elemental kingdoms. From these are eventually born what becomes the mineral kingdom in all its variety, substances which at the physical level come to constitute the elements of the chemists. This kingdom constitutes the base for and eventually gives rise to the vegetable kingdom. From that in turn is born the animal kingdom and then comes the human. This does not mean that minerals, as such, become vegetables and so on. In the Esoteric Science we are told that it is “Life” (dynamism, spirit, consciousness) which always preserving its pristine unchangeable purity assumes “forms” of infinite variety in the kingdoms to give it expression on an ever-ascending scale.

The whole process, however, in its progressive nature, its ‘perpetual motion’, or ‘ever-becoming’, is subject to the Law in its cause-to-effect aspect.

In the process man, humanity in the aggregate, occupies a unique position. It is at this point of development that the so-called descending arc of evolutionary progress, i.e. the one in which spirit is, so to say, descending into matter, changes to one of ascent, i.e. spirit emerging from slowly regenerating matter. Coincident with this man’s mental unfoldment begins to emerge from the selfish concerns of his personality to the more spiritual ones of his innate but up-till-then dormant individual spiritual Ego. A reflection of the One Universal SELF.

This scheme of things is pre-ordained according to Law and its working out according as each man (human being of either sex) responsibly works out his own ‘destiny’. Mankind as a whole progresses only by the aggregate of the progress made by the individuals comprising it.

*The Secret Doctrine* makes it clear that the whole process of Nature and what the literature calls “a man-bearing globe” such as our Earth, is centred in the spiritual development of man. This is accomplished by way of his innumerable incarnations during which he slowly develops his vehicles of consciousness at the mundane level to a point where they can be responsive to, and then reflect, the ever-growing, truly spiritual nature of the individual inner man. By this means the whole of humanity is brought to a state of spiritual perfection in time:

The Grand Cycle includes the progress of mankind from the appearance of primordial man of ethereal form. It runs through the inner cycles of his (man’s) progressive evolution from the ethereal down to the semi-ethereal and purely physical; down to the redemption of man from his *coat of skin* and matter, after which it continues running its course downward and then upward again, to meet at the culmination of a Round, when the manvantaric Serpent “swallows” its tail” and seven minor cycles are passed....

[S.D.I, 642]

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KARMA-NEMESIS is the creator of nations and mortals, but once created, it is they who make of her either a fury or a rewarding Angel. Yea - "Wise are they who worship [In a footnote H.P.B. says that "dread" would be a better word than "worship"] Nemesis" - as the *chorus* tells Prometheus; and as unwise they, who believe that the goddess may be propitiated by whatever sacrifices and prayers, or have her wheel diverted from the path it has once taken. "The triform Fates and ever-mindful Furies" are her attributes only on earth and begotten by ourselves. There is no return from the paths she cycles over; yet those paths are our own making, for it is we, collectively or individually, who prepare them. Karma-Nemesis is the synonym of PROVIDENCE, minus *design*, goodness, and every other *finite* attribute and qualification, so unphilosophically attributed to the latter.... For the only decree of Karma - an eternal and immutable decree - is absolute Harmony in the world of matter as it is in the world of Spirit. It is not, therefore, Karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we, who reward or punish ourselves according to whether we work with, through and along with nature, abiding by the laws on which that Harmony depends, or - break them.

[S.D.I, 643]

Nor would the ways of Karma be inscrutable were men to work in union and harmony, instead of disunion and strife. For our ignorance of those ways - which one portion of mankind calls the ways of Providence, dark and intricate, while another sees in them the action of blind Fatalism, and a third, simple chance, with neither gods nor devils to guide them - would surely disappear, if we would but attribute all these to their correct cause. With right knowledge, or at any rate with a confident conviction that our neighbours will no more work to hurt us than we would think of harming them, the two-thirds of the World's evil would vanish into thin air. Were no man to hurt his brother, Karma-Nemesis would have neither cause to work for, nor weapons to act through. It is the constant presence in our midst of every element of strife and opposition, and the division of races, nations, tribes, societies and individuals into Cains and Abels, wolves and lambs, that is the chief cause of the "ways of Providence". We cut these numerous windings in our destinies daily with our own hands, while we imagine that we are pursuing a track on the royal high road of respectability and duty, and then complain of those ways being so intricate and so dark. We stand bewildered before the mystery of our own making and the riddles of life that *we will not* solve, and then accuse the great Sphinx of devouring us. But verily there is not an accident in our lives; not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or in another life. If one breaks the laws of Harmony, or, as a theosophical writer expresses it, "the laws of life", one must be prepared to fall into the chaos one has oneself produced. For, according to the same writer, "the only conclusion one can come to is that these laws of life are their own avengers; and consequently that every avenging Angel is only a typified representation of their reaction".

Therefore, if anyone is helpless before these immutable laws, it is not ourselves, the artificers of our destinies, but rather those angels, the guardians of harmony. Karma-Nemesis is no more than the (spiritual) dynamical effect of causes produced and forces awakened into activity by our own actions. It is a law of occult dynamics that "a given amount of energy expended on the spiritual or astral plane is productive of far greater results than the same amount expended on the physical objective plane of existence."

[S.D.I, 644]

There are passages in *The Secret Doctrine* which tell us how the Karma of the human race was

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developed. One significant factor in this was brought about by entities who had developed their spirituality to a considerable degree in past cycles but who were, however, destined by the Law to incarnate into human forms at a very lowly state of development. Some did not incarnate, and incurred a Karmic debt which they had to discharge later by assuming even less developed human bodies. This had considerable repercussions in man's relationship to the animal kingdom. This is all described in some detail in Vol II.

There are many specific references to the consequences of this delayed incarnation by those superior Beings.

In Vol II, 679, there is a discussion involving the effects of the "sin of the mindless", and later of the transgressions of the early Atlanteans on the future of the human race. The effects of these 'sins' could not be avoided. There is a short but significant statement as follows:

... but Karma is a mysterious law, and no respecter of persons.

[S.D.II, 679]

In places *The Secret Doctrine*, particularly Vol II, makes some quite specific statements regarding prehistoric man. In general terms it describes the movements of human stock from continent to continent.

As to the African tribes - themselves diverging offshoots of Atlanteans modified by climate and conditions - they crossed into Europe over the peninsula which made the Mediterranean an inland sea. Fine races were many of the European cave men; the Cro-Magnon, for instance. But, as was to be expected, *progress is almost non-existent* through the whole of the vast period allotted by Science to the Chipped Stone-Age. *The cyclic impulse downwards* weighs heavily on the stocks thus transplanted - the incubus of the *Atlantean Karma* is upon them. Finally, Palaeolithic man makes room for his successor - and disappears almost entirely from the scene.

[S.D.II, 740]

There are some general statements as to how Karma regulates the human race stocks: plain statements to the effect that all the race-remains of earlier types, i.e. the Yellow Races and the Black Africans down to the present European Whites, are dying out:

It is a most suggestive fact - to those concrete thinkers who demand a *physical* proof of Karma - that the lowest races of men are now rapidly dying out; a phenomenon largely due to an extraordinary sterility setting in among the women, from the time that they were first approached by the Europeans.

Why does this (Karmic) sterility attack and root out certain races at their "appointed hour"?... Ethnology will sooner or later have to recognize with Occultists that the true solution has to be sought for in a comprehension of the workings of Karma.... "The time is drawing near when there

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will remain nothing but three great human types" ... the white (Aryan, Fifth Root-Race), the yellow, and the African negro - with their crossings (Atlanto-European divisions)... Those who realize that every Root-Race runs through a gamut of seven sub-races with seven branchlets, etc., will understand the "why". The tide wave of incarnating Egos has rolled past them to harvest experience in more developed and less senile stocks; and their extinction is hence a Karmic necessity.

[S.D.II, 779-80]

One has only to read the history of the races of men who have inhabited our Earth up to the present one, the 5<sup>th</sup> Root Race, to discover that human imperfections throughout, including those stemming from the descent of Spirit into matter with its lower urges, passions, have broken the Law. In the words of *The Secret Doctrine*, "they have sinned", and thereby incurred Karma, the effects of which persist to the present time:

And if we say "sin", it is merely that everyone should understand our meaning; as the term *Karma* would be the right one to use in this case; while the reader who would feel perplexed at the use of the term "spiritual" instead of "physical", iniquity is reminded of the fact that there can be no physical iniquity. The body is merely the irresponsible organ, the tool of the *psychic*, if not of the "Spiritual man". While in the case of the Atlanteans [the fourth race], it was precisely the Spiritual being which sinned, the Spirit element being still the "Master" principle in man, in those days. Thus it is in those days that the heaviest Karma of the Fifth Race was generated by our Monads [Monads here is used in the sense of the homogeneous Monad plus individual Manas].

[S.D.II, 302]

In many places Karma or the Law is related to Deity or God, whose attributes are compared with it. Occultism, however, states categorically that *Deity is Law and Law is Deity*.

The "still greater and still more exacting divinity" than the god of this world, supposed so "good" - is KARMA. And this true Divinity shows well that the lesser one, our inner God (personal for the time being), has no power to arrest the mighty hand of this greater Deity, the CAUSE awakened by our actions generating smaller causes, which is called the LAW OF RETRIBUTION.

[S.D.II, 555fn]

In its broadest sense the law of Karma applies to individuals, groups and even nations. A student asks:

Are there any causes, other than the spread of Theosophy, which may operate to reverse the present drift towards materialism?

The answer is:

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The spread of the knowledge of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation and of a belief in the absolute spiritual unity of all beings will alone prevent this drift.

[C.W.IX, 103]

That quotation is a clear indication of the Society's responsibility via its members to let it be known that such a thing as Theosophy exists.

Another question posed was:

Is there not some connection between the Karma of man and elementals?

And the reply:

A very important one. The elemental world has become a strong factor in the Karma of the human race.... In the earlier ages, when we may postulate that man had not yet begun to make bad Karma, the elemental world was more friendly to man because it had not received unfriendly impressions. But so soon as man began to become ignorant, unfriendly to himself and the rest of creation, the elemental world began to take on exactly the same complexion and return to humanity the exact pay, so to speak, due for the actions of humanity.... And, being unconscious and only acting according to the natural laws of its being, the elemental world is a powerful factor in the workings of Karma.

[C.W.IX, 110]

In the discourse between an enquirer and a theosophist there are the following passages:

THEO. In every conceivable case he [the theosophist] himself must be a centre of spiritual action, and from him and his own daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellow men.

ENQ. But why should he do this? Are not he and all, as you teach, conditioned by their Karma, and must not Karma necessarily work itself out on certain lines?

THEO. It is this very law of Karma which gives strength to all that I have said The individual cannot separate himself from the race, nor the race from the individual. The law of Karma applies equally to all, although all are not equally developed. In helping the development of others, the Theosophist believes that he is not only helping them to fulfil their Karma, but that he is also, in the strictest sense, fulfilling his own.

[Key, 236]

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The law of Karma is often closely associated with the doctrine of reincarnation and in many places in the literature it is said that a knowledge of these two could be the salvation of mankind and lead it safely along its evolutionary path. It is said that it requires no special education or intellectual capacities to understand this dual doctrine. Nevertheless the subject is treated in great depth, leading to a real understanding of how both the Law and reincarnation are parts of the grand process of the Universal Life.

It does not require metaphysics or education to make a man understand the broad truths of Karma and Reincarnation.

[Key, 246]

Then again:

The chief point is to uproot that most fertile source of all crime and immorality - the belief that it is possible for them [criminals] to escape the consequences of their own actions. Once teach them that greatest of all laws, *Karma and Reincarnation*, and besides feeling in themselves the true dignity of human nature, they will turn from evil and eschew it as they would a physical danger.

[Key, 248]

One further interesting piece of information is given us:

It is, moreover, unquestionable that in the case of human incarnations the law of Karma, racial or individual, overrides the subordinate tendencies of "Heredity", its servant.

[S.D.II, 178.]

In the literature it is explained that there are a finite number of monads associated with our planet; they are all subject to a vast cyclic evolutionary scheme by Races and sub-Races. The seventh Race will be the last and the most perfect.

... Mankind, from the First down to the last, or Seventh Race, is composed of one and the same company of actors, who have descended from higher spheres to perform their artistic tour on this our planet, Earth.... Our macrocosm and its smallest microcosm, man, are both repeating the same play of universal and individual events at each station, as on every stage on which Karma leads them to enact their respective dramas of life.

[C.W.XIV, 303]

#### 4. MAN - AS AN INDIVIDUAL

At the Introduction to Section 2 we saw how the evolution of spiritual humanity is according to the aggregate of the progress made by individuals. Everything during its period of existence is subject to the Law, as the grand directive agent, but each man becomes a special case by reason of his freedom to act against the Law. He is a responsible being whereas all things and creatures below him can only act according to their inherent nature. They make no decisions whereas man does, and, as we shall see, the intention or motive behind any act he performs affects its Karmic consequence.

But Karma will reconcile all our differences of opinion. A strict account of our actual work will be taken, and the “wages” earned will be recorded to our credit. But as strict an account will be taken of the work which anyone, by indulging in personal grievances, may have hindered his neighbours from doing. Think you it is a light thing to hinder the force of the Theosophical Society, as represented in the person of any of its leaders, from doing its appointed work? So surely as there is a Karmic power behind the Society will that power exact the account for its hindrance, and he is a rash and ignorant man who opposes his puny self to it in the execution of its appointed task.

Thus, then “UNION IS STRENGTH”; and for every reason private differences must be sunk in united work for our Great Cause.

[C.W.XI, 166]

Again and again the idea of Unity, as it applies to Cosmos and mankind, is stressed. What affects the part affects the whole. Particularly is this the case with human beings who can make choices in their actions, and who are thus responsible for the consequences. The next extract is pertinent to this:

“. . . Let not the fruit of good Karma be your motive; for your Karma, good or bad, being one and common property of all mankind, nothing good or bad can happen to you that is not shared by many others. Hence your motive, being selfish, can only generate a double effect, good and bad, and will either nullify your good action, or turn it to another man’s profit.” . . . “There is no happiness for one who is ever thinking of self and forgetting all other Selves.”

“The Universe groans under the weight of such action (Karma), and none other than self-sacrificial Karma relieves it.... How many of you have helped humanity to carry its smallest burden, that you should all regard yourselves as Theosophists. Oh, men of the West, who would play at being the Saviours of mankind before they even spare the life of a mosquito whose sting threatens them would you be partakers of Divine Wisdom or true Theosophists? Then do as the gods when incarnated do. Feel yourselves the vehicles of the whole humanity, mankind, as part of yourselves, and act accordingly...”

[C.W.XI, 168-9]

The principle of Unity is further illustrated in the next quotation in relation to our inner spiritual selves, our Egos:

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No Ego differs from another Ego, in its primordial or original essence and nature. That which makes one mortal a great man and another a vulgar, silly person is,... the quality and makeup of the physical shell or casing, and the adequacy or inadequacy of brain and body to transmit and give expression to the light of the real, *Inner* man; and this aptness or inaptness is, in its turn, the result of Karma.

[C.W.XII, 15]

In various places *The Secret Doctrine* outlines the occult constitution of man, delineating seven 'principles'. Each of these principles characteristically manifests aspects of life which have so far been developed by living entities during the cycles of existence preceding our present one. All things in the kingdoms of Nature become heir at their level to what has been achieved beforehand by other living entities. Man being at the top of the scale inherits most, and most of his seven postulated principles are quickened and developed thereby. Insofar as they are, his various subjective faculties are operating.

In several places the close association of a man's destiny with his astrological influences is stressed. The following quotation amplifies this:

...the science of Astrology only determines the nature of effects, by a knowledge of the law of magnetic affinities and attractions of the Planetary bodies, but that it is the Karma of the individual himself, which places him in that particular magnetic relation.

[C.W.VI, 327]

Theosophy tells us that we cannot judge anyone by his apparent personality or by what he does; we cannot know his spiritual stature:

Do not be too severe on the merits or demerits of one who seeks admission among your ranks [of theosophists], as the truth about the actual state of the inner man can only be known to, and dealt with justly by, KARMA alone.

[C.W.VII, 170]

As we have seen, motive is a factor in the workings of the Law. Where causes are created in ignorance or diminished responsibility, the effects will be suitably adjusted, for example:

A short analysis of the Karmic effects that would be produced by the exercise of such powers [hypnotism] may prove interesting to theosophists....

How much more forcibly this law of simple retributive justice must act on the psychic plane; and what, therefore, may be the responsibility incurred by using such psychological powers, in the face of Karma and its punitive laws, may be easily inferred. Is it not evident that, if even human justice recognizes the impossibility of punishing an irrational idiot, a child, a minor, etc., taking into account even hereditary causes and bad family influences - that the divine Law of Retribution,

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which we call KARMA, must visit with hundredfold severity one who deprives reasonable, thinking men of their free will and powers of ratiocination?... What adept or even moderately informed chela would ever risk an endless future by interfering with, and therefore taking upon himself, the Karmic debit of all those whom he would so psychologize as to make of them merely the tools of his own sweet will!

[C.W.XI, 55-6]

There is a footnote here (C.W.XI, 138) to the effect that all Monads on their way to becoming human pass through animal stages but this in cycles of evolution on globes other than our present one.

Concerning the Karma of a child who dies before reaching the age of seven and the spiritualistic belief that the child having died can visit them from the Summerland, we have:

We [Theosophists] must not *hurt their feelings* by insisting that every child who dies before the age of reason - when only it becomes a responsible creature - reincarnates immediately after its death - since, having had no personal merit or demerit in any of its actions, it can have no claim on Devachanic reward and bliss. Also that as it is irresponsible till the age of say, seven, the full weight of the Karmic effects generated during its short life falls directly upon those who reared and guided it. They will hear of no such philosophical truths, based on eternal justice and Karmic action.

[C.W.XI, 140]

As with so many things in Occultism we have always to bear in mind that we are not just dealing with the objective plane. Theosophy teaches us of the realms superior to or behind that.

*... 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 an immutable law of absolute Love, Justice, and Mercy.

[Key, 138]

From this it is obvious that love, justice and mercy permeate the whole of existence.

There are many telling passages in the literature which, when brought to our attention, can give us a proper understanding of the ill or good fortunes that attend us through life. One of these is in the first book written by H.P.B. in 1877, *Isis Unveiled*. It indicates that, even at the commencement of her writings, she was fully versed in many occult subjects.

From the remotest antiquity *mankind as a whole has always been convinced of the existence of a personal spiritual entity within the personal physical man*. This inner entity was more or less divine, according to its proximity to the *crown* - Christos. The closer the union the more serene man's destiny, the less dangerous the external conditions. This belief is neither bigotry nor

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superstition, only an ever-present, instinctive feeling of the proximity of another spiritual and invisible world. Which, though it be subjective to the senses of the outward man, is perfectly objective to the inner ego. Furthermore, they believed that *there are external and internal conditions which affect the determination of our will upon our actions*. They reject fatalism, for fatalism implies a blind course of some still blinder power. But they believed in *destiny (or Karma)*, which from birth to death every man is weaving thread by thread around himself, as a spider does his cobweb; and this destiny is guided either by that presence termed by some the guardian angel, or our more intimate astral inner man, who is but too often the evil genius of the man of flesh (or the *personality*). Both these lead on the outward man, but one of them must prevail; and from the very beginning of the invisible affray the stern and implacable *law of compensation (and retribution)* steps in and takes its course, following faithfully the fluctuations (of the conflict). When the last strand is woven, and man is seemingly enwrapped in the network of his own doing then he finds himself completely under the empire of this *self-made* destiny. It then either fixes him like the inert shell against the immovable rock, or like a feather carries him away in a whirlwind raised by his own actions.

[I.U.II, 593]

Such is the destiny of the MAN -the true Ego, not the Automaton, the *shell* that goes by that name. It is for him to become the conqueror over matter.

[Key 182]

The concern of most of us is what determines the overall patten of our lives, sometimes quite contrarily to what we have planned or might wish. Something seems to determine whether the wheel of fortune turns in our favour or against us. The next paragraph is very explanatory on this matter:

And we believe neither in vicarious atonement, nor in the possibility of the remission of the smallest sin by any god, not even by a "*personal Absolute*" or "Infinite", if such a thing could have any existence. What we believe in is strict and impartial justice. Our idea of the unknown Universal Deity, represented by Karma, is that it is a Power which cannot fail, and can therefore, have neither wrath nor mercy, only absolute Equity, which leaves every cause, great or small, to work out its inevitable effects. The saying of Jesus: "With what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again" (*Matt., vii, 2*), neither by expression nor implication points to any hope of future mercy or salvation by proxy... we cannot recommend too strongly mercy, charity, and forgiveness of mutual offences. *Resist not evil, and render good for evil*,... were first preached in view of the implacability of Karmic law. For man to take the law into his own hands is anyhow a sacrilegious presumption. Human Law may use restrictive, not punitive measure; but a man who, believing in Karma, still revenges himself and refuses to forgive every injury, thereby rendering good for evil, is a criminal and only hurts himself. As Karma is sure to punish a man who wronged him, by seeking to inflict an additional punishment on his enemy, he, who instead of leaving that punishment to the great Law adds to it his own mite, only begets thereby a cause for the future reward of his own enemy and a future punishment for himself. The unfailing Regulator affects in each incarnation the quality of its successor; and the sum of the merit or demerit in preceding ones determines it.

[Key,199-200]

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After many examples of the workings of Karma in practice in society H.P.B. quotes E.D. Walker in his *Reincarnation* as follows:

Briefly, the doctrine of Karma is that we have made ourselves what we are by former actions, and are building our future eternity by present actions. There is no destiny but what we ourselves determine. There is no salvation or condemnation except what we ourselves bring about . . . Because it offers no shelter for culpable actions and necessitates a sterling manliness, it is less welcome to weak natures than the easy religious tenets of vicarious atonement, intercessions, forgiveness and death-bed conversions . . . In the domain of eternal justice the offence and the punishment are inseparably connected as the same event, because there is no real distinction between the action and its outcome . . . It is Karma, or our old acts, that draws us back into earthly life. The spirit's abode changes according to its Karma, and this Karma forbids any long continuance in one condition, because it is always changing. So long as action is governed by material and selfish motives just so long must the effect of that action be manifested in physical rebirths. Only the perfectly selfless man can elude the gravitation of material life. Few have attained this, but it is the goal of mankind.

[Key, 209-10]

A very good summary of the law of Karma as it applies to us individually is quoted by H.P.B. in *The Key*; it is by the wife of Mr A.P. Sinnett to whom the famous Mahatma Letters were addressed:

Every individual is making Karma either good or bad in each action and thought of his daily round, and is at the same time working out in this life the Karma brought about by the acts and desires of the last. When we see people afflicted by congenital ailments, it may be safely assumed that these ailments are the inevitable results of causes started by themselves in a previous birth. It may be argued that, as these afflictions are hereditary, they can have nothing to do with a past incarnation; but it must be remembered that the Ego, the real man, the individuality, has no spiritual origin in the parentage by which it is re-embodied, but is drawn by the affinities which its previous mode of life attracted round it into the current that carries it, when the time comes for rebirth, to the home best fitted for the development of those tendencies . . . This doctrine of Karma when properly understood is well calculated to guide and assist those who realize its truth to a higher and better mode of life, for it must not be forgotten that not only our actions but our thoughts also are most assuredly followed by a crowd of circumstances that will influence for good or for evil our own future, and what is still more important, the future of many of our fellow-creatures. If sins of omission and commission could in any case be only self-regarding, the effect on the sinner's Karma would be a matter of minor consequence. The fact that every thought and act through life carries with it for good or evil a corresponding influence on other members of the human family renders a strict sense of justice, morality, and unselfishness so necessary to future happiness and progress. A crime once committed, an evil though sent out from the mind, are past recall - no amount of repentance can wipe out their results in the future . . . Repentance, if sincere, will deter a man from repeating errors; it cannot save him or others from the effects of those already produced, which will most unerringly overtake him either in this life or in the next rebirth.

[Key, 212]

From this extract we see the consequences of our actions not only affecting the perpetrators but many

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others as well.

ENQ. Can anyone, even an Adept or Seer, follow out this Karmic process of readjustment in detail?

THEO. Certainly: "Those who *know*" can do so by the exercise of powers which are latent even in all men.

[Key, 215]

The rest of this chapter (Key XI) to the middle of p 218 gives further examples of the workings of Karma in our lives.

Scattered throughout the many references to Law and Karma there are passages illustrative of its workings:

The case would be quite different if the same evil acts (perpetrated by primitive hunters for food) had been done by an educated and civilised person from a mere love of sport. The savage being reborn would simply take a low place in the scale, by reason of his imperfect moral development, while the *Karma* of the other would be tainted with moral delinquency.

[MLC 68, 192]

Collective Karma, i.e., of group, nation or race, is often referred to. Each individual as well as his 'personal' Karma cannot escape his collective Karma as well.

It is a true manhood when one boldly accepts one's share of the collective Karma of the group one works with, and does not permit oneself to be embittered, and to see others in blacker colours than reality, or to throw all blame upon some one "black sheep", a victim, specially selected.

[MLC 131, 437]

Sometimes the question is raised of social status, a person's position not only within a particular society, e.g., affluent, civilized, cultured or backward, primitive and poor as far as worldly amenities go, in relation to Karma. We have the following:

The social status of a being is, of course, a result of Karma; the law being that "like attracts like". The renascent being is drawn into the gestative current with which the preponderating attractions coming over from the last birth make him assimilate.

[MLC 104, 362]

Nor has wealth nor poverty, high or low birth any influence upon it, for this is all a result of their

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Karma. Neither has - what you call - civilization much to do with the progress. It is the *inner* man, the spirituality, the illumination of the physical brain by the light of the spiritual or divine intelligence that is *the* test.

[MLC, 62, 160]

## 5. REINCARNATION

In the literature the importance of a proper understanding of the twin laws of Karma and Reincarnation is stressed. Reincarnation is the periodic embodiment of the immortal spiritual Entity, the Ego, into a new physical body at the start of a personal life. Karma is the law of periodicity or alternation under which this happens and it is also that law which determines from previous causes the nature, the characteristics of the new person, and also the place, parents and other circumstances of the birth.

In the literature, again, particularly in the Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett, there is a detailed account of the processes of dying and afterwards. At each stage Karma is involved. The after-death states are all according to Law but the experience of the deceased is always quite individual and dependent on their thoughts and actions during life.

One of the most descriptive passages in the Letters is a long one. It relates the operations of the Law to the individual in life, in death, and as it affects the circumstances of rebirth.

If you ask a learned Buddhist priest, what is Karma? - he will tell you that Karma is what a Christian might call Providence (in a certain sense only) and a Mahomedan - *Kismet*, fate or destiny (again in one sense). That it is that cardinal tenet which teaches that, as soon as any conscious or sentient being, whether man, deva, or animal dies, a new being is produced and he or it reappears in another birth, on the same or another planet, under conditions of his or its own antecedent making. Or, in other words that *Karma* is the guiding power, and *Trishna* (in Pali *Tanha*) the thirst or desire to sentiently live - the proximate force or energy, the resultant of human (or animal) action, which, out of the old *Skandhas* produces the new group that form the new being and control the nature of the birth itself. Or to make it still clearer, the *new* being is rewarded and punished for the meritorious acts and misdeeds of the *old* one; Karma representing an Entry Book, in which all the acts of man, good, bad, or indifferent, are carefully recorded to his debit and credit - by himself, so to say, or rather by these very actions of his. There, where Christian poetical fiction created and sees a "Recording" Guardian Angel, stern and realistic Buddhist logic, perceiving the necessity that every cause should have its effect - shows its real presence. The opponents of Buddhism have laid great stress upon the alleged injustice that the doer should escape and an innocent victim be made to suffer, - since the doer and the sufferer are different being. The fact is, that while in one sense they may be so considered, yet in another *they are identical*. The "old being" is the sole parent - father and mother at once - of the "new being". It is the former who is the creator and fashioner of the latter, in reality; and far more so in plain truth than any father in flesh. And once that you have well mastered the meaning of *Skandhas* you will see what I mean.

[MLC 68, 198-9]

Skandhas are shortly the predispositions and tendencies, emotional, mental and to a degree physical, brought forward from the old to the new personality. In other words, they condition it as effects of causes generated in the past.

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After a series of 'purificatory' processes after actual physical death, during which generally the deceased in unconscious, consciousness slowly returns and the 'person' finds himself in idealized spiritual blissful surroundings. This state is known as Devachan:

"Who goes to Devachan?" The personal Ego of course, but beatified, purified, holy. Every Ego - the combination of the sixth and seventh principles - which after the period of unconscious gestation is reborn into the Devachan, is of necessity as innocent and pure as a new-born babe. The fact of his being reborn at all, shows the preponderance of good over evil in his old personality. And while the Karma (of evil) steps aside for the time being to follow him in his future earth-reincarnation, he brings along with him but the Karma of his good deeds, words, and thoughts into this Devachan. "Bad" is a relative term for us ... and the Law of Retribution is the only law that never errs. Hence all those who have not slipped down into the mire of unredeemable sin and bestiality - go to the Devachan. They will have to pay for their sins, voluntary and involuntary, later on. Meanwhile they are rewarded; receive the *effects* of the *causes* produced by them.

[MLC 68, 190]

The period in Devachan

... lasts in proportion to the good Karma, after which the *monad* is again reincarnated.... "In all these Rupa-Lokas the Devas (Spirits) are equally subjected to birth, decay, old age and death" means only that an Ego is borne thither, then begins fading out and finally "dies", *i.e.*, falls into that unconscious condition which precedes rebirth;...they leave a world of bliss to be reborn in a world of causes.

The period lasts

For years, decades, centuries and milleniums, oftentimes multiplied by something more. It all depends upon the duration of Karma.

[MLC 68, 194-5]

The mechanism whereby each individual man proceeds in his evolutionary journey from life to life is beautifully described:

The latter (Occultism) teaches that - (a) the life-atoms of our life-principle (*Prana*) are never entirely lost when a man dies. That the atoms best impregnated with the life-principle (an independent, eternal, conscious factor) are partially transmitted from father to son by heredity, and partially are drawn once more together and become the animating principles of the new body in every new incarnation of the Monads. Because (b), as the *individual* Soul is ever the same, so are the atoms of the lower principles (body, its astral, or *life-double*, etc.), drawn as they are by affinity and Karmic law always to the same individuality in a series of various bodies, etc., etc.

[S.D. II, 671-2]

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Much is said in theosophical literature about the after-death states (particularly in the Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett). It is made abundantly clear in those letters that all the after-death states are effects of causes generated during the lifetime of individuals upon Earth.

The correct comprehension of the law of Karma is entirely opposed to the idea (of rites and ceremonies after death). As no person's karma can be either lightened or overburdened with the good or bad actions of the next of kin of the departed one, every man having his karma independent and distinct from that of his neighbour - no more can the departed soul be made responsible for the doings of those it left behind.

[C.W.IV, 507]

There are some very illustrative passages concerning the workings of Karma and our state after death. The following are some sample extracts:

In each birth the *personality* differs from that of the previous or next succeeding birth. Karma, the *deus ex machina*, masks (or shall we say reflects?) itself now in the personality of a sage, again as an artisan, and so on throughout the string of births. But though personalities ever shift, the one line of life along which they are strung like beads, runs unbroken . .

This is followed by the statement:

The time will come ... when the Ego [i.e., the one line of Life, the spiritual individuality] will regain its consciousness of all its past stages of existence ...

These two quotations give "the key to a correct understanding of the question as to what *Karma* propels the higher *Ego* into the next birth...".

Another informative quote is as follows:

... no human soul is yet born utterly depraved, and ... there was a time during the youth of the sinful human personality when it had worked out some kind or other of *Karma*; and ... it is this that survives and forms the basis of the *Karma* to come.

[C.W.IV, 571]

And further:

The fifth principle [Mind] of the sensual, highly depraved man, may well and will perish, while the *Karma* of his youth, though not strong and complete enough to secure for him a bliss in *Devachan* and union with his higher principle - is yet sufficiently outlined to allow the monad a grasp on it for

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the next rebirth.... it so happens sometimes that the *Karma* of a personality is not fully worked out in the birth that follows. Life is made up of accidents, and the personality that becomes, may be hindered by circumstances from receiving the full due its *Karma* is entitled to, whether for good or for bad. But the Law of Retribution will never allow itself to be cheated by blind chance. There is then a provision to be made, and the accounts that could not be settled in one birth will be squared in the succeeding one.

[C.W.IV, 572]

(Note: monad here is the monad proper, i.e. Atma and Buddhi, plus Higher Manas.)

Regarding the after-death states we have the following:

... although one particular personality may be so depraved as to be entirely dissociated from the spiritual monad and go into the *eighth* sphere, where annihilation is its lot, yet the impressions of the previous personalities upon the higher *Ego* have in them potentially enough to evolve a new physical Ego ...

In the same manner, the *Ego* when at the end of its long pilgrimage will regain consciousness of those personalities only which have made a sufficiently strong spiritual, hence indelible, mark on the monad, while the memory of the conscious acts of the particular depraved personality which goes to the eighth sphere will be entirely obliterated.

[C.W.IV, 572-3]

The information we are given about the after-death states can give us a completely new view of death itself. After death we are in a conscious intermediate state between lives.

Were people to study the scriptures of all nations and interpret their meaning by the light of esoteric philosophy, no one would fail to become, if not anxious to die, at least indifferent to death. We should then make profitable use of the time we pass on this earth by quietly preparing in each birth for the next by accumulating good Karma.

[C.W.VII, 48]

As we have seen, there is a mechanism which transmits the effects of past lifetimes into our present one. This is by way of life-atoms or Elementals. Concerning any particular man we have the following:

All that bundle of *Egotism*, that apparent and evanescent "I", disappears after death,... Nothing remains now of that "bundle" to go to the next incarnation, except *the seed for future Karma* that *Manas* may have united to its immortal group, to form with it - the disembodied *Higher Self* in "Devachan".

[C.W.VII, 186]

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In a general dissertation on Karma, H.P.B. defines metempsychosis as “the transmigration of the human soul into an animal form”. She distinguishes between that and “Reincarnation, or the rebirth of the same Ego in successive human bodies”.

Useless to tell him [ the seeker after truth} that Nature, propelled by Karma, never recedes, but strives ever forward in her work on the physical plane; that she may lodge a human soul in the body of a man, morally ten times lower than any animal, but she will not reverse the order of her kingdoms; and while leading the irrational monad of a beast of a higher order into the human form at the first hour of a Manvantara, she will not guide that Ego, once it has become a man, even of the lowest kind, back into the animal species - not during that cycle (or Kalpa) at any rate.

[C.W.XI, 137]

The teachings tell us much in detail about the after-death states where most of us spend most of our time in the centuries between lives. As we will see from the following extract, it is not an unconditioned state:

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, provided for the now disembodied Entity a long lease of mental rest [Devachan] *i.e.* the entire oblivion of every 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.

[Key, 140]

There is no accident in the coming together again in future lives of groups of people, including the members of families. We read:

... for pure divine love is not merely the blossom of a human heart, but has its roots in eternity. Spiritual love is immortal and Karma brings sooner or later all those who loved each other with such a spiritual affection to incarnate once more in the same family group.

[Key, 150]

A reminder of how our after-life and future lives are determined by our present actions is as follows:

Karma acts incessantly: we reap *in our after-life* only the fruit of that which we have ourselves sown in this.

[Key,160]

That is reinforced by the following:

Our philosophy teaches that Karmic punishment reaches the Ego only in its next incarnation. After

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death it receives only the reward for the unmerited sufferings endured in its past incarnation. The whole punishment after death, even for the materialist, consists, therefore, in the absence of any reward, and the utter loss of the consciousness of one's bliss and rest. Karma is the child of the terrestrial Ego, the fruit of the actions of the tree which is objective personality visible to all, as much as the fruit of all the thoughts and even motives of the spiritual "I"; but Karma is also the tender mother, who heals the wounds inflicted by her during the preceding life, before she will begin to torture this Ego by inflicting on him new ones.

[Key, 161]

Nowhere else but in the teachings of Theosophy as given us by the Masters (sometimes through H.P.B.) do we have the detail of our after-life and what conditions it.

Occult science teaches that the frame of mind in which a man dies, is

of the utmost importance owing to the abnormal and psychic state in which he then is. The last thought of a dying person does much to influence his immediate future.... This is not meant, however, to endorse the superstition of a "death-bed repentance", for the immutable justice and harmony of the karmic Law can only return a fleeting effect for a fleeting cause; and the rest of the Karmic debt must be paid in future earth-lives.... at death we shall be judged by our own Higher Self, and under the conduct of the agents of the Karmic Law (the Demiurgos collectively), will have to reincarnate again into the prison of the body, until the past evil Karma has been exhausted. For until the last farthing of the Karmic debt is exhausted, we can never be untied from the wheel of "Samsara" [the great cycle of births and deaths of the immortal Ego].

[C.W.XIII, 74-5fn]

In the Masters' account of the after-death states they say that in Devachan victims of undeserved suffering receive their recompense. Many have questioned this on the score that in their view of Karma there cannot be any undeserved suffering. The following passage justifies the Masters' view:

... it is not the *injustice* or *mistakes* of Karma which are the causes of such "undeserved misery" but other causes, independent of the past Karma of either the producer or the innocent victim of their effects, new *actions* generated by the wickedness of men and circumstances; i.e., the punishment of those who caused these new *Nidanas* (or causal connections) and the reward of him who suffered from them undeservedly."

[C.W.X, 47]

ENQ. Then the personal man must always go on suffering *blindly* the Karmic penalties which the Ego has incurred?

THEO. Not quite so. At the solemn moment of death everyman, even when death is sudden, sees the whole of his past life marshalled before him, in its minutest details.... this instant is enough to show to him the whole chain of causes which have been at work during his life....

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ENQ. Does this happen to everyone?

THEO. Without any exception. Very good and holy men see ... not only the life they are leaving, but even several preceding lives in which were produced the causes that made them what they were in the life just closing. They recognize the law of Karma in all its majesty and justice.

[Key, 162]

Then there is the significant statement concerning the processes of rebirth:

The law of retribution as *Karma* waits man at the threshold of his new incarnation...

[C.W.VII, 180fn]

As said before, the Masters have given us a detailed account of the after-death processes and those of rebirth:

ENQ. And what is it that regulates the duration, or special qualities of these incarnations?

THEO. Karma, the universal law of retributive justice.

ENQ. Is it an intelligent law?

THEO. For the Materialist, who calls the law of periodicity which regulates the marshalling of the several bodies, and all the other laws in nature, blind forces and mechanical laws, no doubt Karma would be a law of chance and no more. For us, no adjective or qualification could describe that which is impersonal and no entity, but a universal operative law. If you question me about the causative intelligence in it, I must answer you I do not know. But if you ask me to define its effects and tell you what these are in our belief, I may say that the experience of thousands of ages has shown us that they are absolute and unerring *equity, wisdom, and intelligence*. For Karma in its effects is an unfailing redresser of human injustice, and of all the failures of nature; a stern adjuster of wrongs; a retributive law which rewards and punishes with equal impartiality. It is, in the strictest sense, "no respecter of persons", though, on the other hand, it can neither be propitiated, nor turned aside by prayer.

[Key, 198]

Among the details of the after-death processes given by the Masters is what happens to the victims of accident and to suicides. The victims are not responsible for their deaths but suicides are.

*Motive* is everything and man is punished in a case of *direct* responsibility, never otherwise. In the victim's case of the natural hour of death was anticipated *accidentally*, while in that of the suicide,

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death is brought on voluntarily and with a full and deliberate knowledge of its immediate consequences.

[MLC 70c, 213]

The Masters are quite explicit about the nature of the post-mortem entities that can communicate, through mediums, with the living, and about the dangers to them of doing so.

But if the victim of accident or violence be neither very good, nor very bad - an average person - then this may happen to him. A medium who attracts him will create for him the most undesirable of things; a new combination of *Skandhas* and a new and evil Karma.

[MLC 68, 198]

Now, the causes producing the “new being” and determining the nature of *Karma* are, as already said - *Trishna* (or “*Tanha*”) - thirst, desire for sentient existence and *Upadana* - which is the realization or consummation of *Trishna* or that desire. And both of these the medium helps to awaken and to develop *nec plus ultra* in an Elementary, be he a suicide or a victim.

[MLC 68, 200]

When the after-death processes are complete - mostly after a very long time, sometimes millennia - rebirth by stages commences. The characteristics of the new being, and even the domestic and group circumstances into which it will be born, are determined by Karma.

... the *new* being is rewarded and punished for the meritorious acts and misdeeds of the *old* one; Karma representing an Entry Book, in which all the acts of man, good, bad, or indifferent, are carefully recorded to his debit and credit ...

[MLC 68, 198]

Even the sex of the new personality to be is determined by Karma:

... is sex a mere accident of each birth ...?

A mere accident - as you say. Generally a chance work yet guided by individual Karma, - moral aptitudes, characteristics and deeds of the previous birth.

[MLC 61, 157]

On earth it is the physiological and mental defects, the sins of the progenitors which are visited upon the issue: in that land of shadows, the new and yet unconscious Ego-foetus becomes the just victim of the transgressions of its old *Self*, whose *karma* - merit and demerit - will alone weave out its future destiny.

[MLC 18, 66]

## 6. THE ASPIRANT

In instructions to aspirants on the spiritual path duty is much stressed. It is not always clear what our duty in certain instances is. The following passages are helpful:

*... it is always wiser to work and force the current of events than to wait for time”....*

If it is right to care for the poor and those who suffer, it is right to care for the rich and all those who will unavoidably be brought to far greater sufferings, unless warned and shown the true cause of all such Karmic sorrows. The poorer a man, the more sad his life, the nearer he is to the end of his punitive Karma; the richer his neighbour, the more full of pleasures his life, the nearer he is - unless he acts in the right path - to his Karmic doom. Help the poor, but pity the ignorant rich.

[C.W.XII, 60-1]

The qualifications required of a chela, i.e., a student / aspirant after knowledge of the Ancient Wisdom are listed. The fourth of these requirements is as follows:

Truthfulness and unswerving faith in the law of Karma, independent of any power in nature that could interfere: a law whose course is not to be obstructed by any agency, not to be caused to deviate by prayer or propitiatory exoteric ceremonies;...

[C.W.IV, 608]

Misconceptions regarding the Masters of the Wisdom or Mahatmas are rife; occasionally some plain statements help to put matters right.

*The Mahatmas are the servants, not the arbiters of the Law of Karma.* LAY CHELASHIP CONFERS NO PRIVILEGE UPON ANYONE EXCEPT THAT OF WORKING FOR MERIT UNDER THE OBSERVATION OF A MASTER.

[C.W.IV, 611]

Many who read this will be associated with the Theosophical Society or another such organization. The following will be interesting to them:

Each of us and all will receive his or her Karma in it [the Society], but the vehicle of Theosophy will stand indestructible and undestroyed...

[C.W.VII, 165]

The Law is universal and applies universally to all things in existence, both creatures and men - even to

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the Masters:

... he [the Master] is himself under the inexorable law of Karma, which no one from the Zulu savage up to the highest archangel can avoid ...

[C.W.VII, 243]

H.P.B. tells us about her shortcomings and her heavy Karma as one committed to the Path:

Imperfect and faulty is my [H.P.B.'s] nature; many and glaring are my shortcomings - and for this my Karma is heavier than that of any other Theosophist.... as soon as one steps on the Path leading to the *Ashrum* of the blessed Masters ... his Karma, instead of having to be distributed throughout his long life, falls upon him in a block and crushes him with its whole weight.

[C.W.VII, 247]

Many an aspirant on the Path is concerned to know the role of the Master towards him. Most of us have not knowingly made such a contact. What would our relationship be with one in the matter of Karma? Answering the question "Do Masters punish?":

Now, I'm not going to tell you all about this. They are just; They embody the Law and Compassion. Do not for an instant imagine that Masters are going to come down on you for your failures and wrongs, if any. Karma looks out for this. Masters' ethics are the highest. From the standpoint of your question. They do not punish.... Karma will do all the punishing that is necessary.

[C.W.X, 270]

By now it is clear that of whatever Karma we have been the cause we can in no wise escape the effects:

The acceptance of Truth and the practice of virtue cannot avert Karma waiting from other lives, but can produce good effects in lives to come, and what the extreme practice of mental curing does is to stave off for a time an amount of Karma which will, later on, reach us. We prefer to let it work out naturally through the material part of us...

[C.W.X, 288]

Returning to the relationship between the Adept and the pupil (chela) it is repeatedly made clear that the teacher - the Adept - under no circumstances interferes with another's Karma:

The true Adept of the "Right Hand" never punishes anyone, not even his bitterest and most dangerous enemy; he simply leaves the latter to his Karma, and Karma never fails to do so, sooner or later.

[C.W.XIV, 31fn]

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Many who read this will be Christians with its doctrine of atonement, the forgiveness of sins. This has been dealt with previously but the idea that Karma and reincarnation are implicit in the New Testament writings will perhaps come as a surprise.

Jesus, the Adept we believe in, taught our Eastern doctrines, KARMA and REINCARNATION foremost of all. When the so-called Christians will have learnt to read the New Testament between the lines, their eyes will be opened and - they will see.

[C.W.XI, 61]

The mass of human sin and frailty is distributed throughout the life of man who is content to remain an average mortal. It is gathered in and centred, so to say, within one period of the life of a chela - the period of probation. That which is generally accumulating to find its legitimate issue only in the next rebirth of an ordinary man, is quickened and fanned into existence in the chela - especially in the presumptuous and selfish candidate who rushes in without having calculated his forces.

[MLC 134, 441]

Further advice is given to the would-be aspirant which indicates the immense difficulty on the path he is intending to tread:

Desire is an energy which ought to be repressed;... It is got rid of by the man himself when repressed, but if given effect hangs round his neck like a mill-stone in the form of Karma.... On his return thence [from death] man finds the Karma of unrepressed Desire waiting for him at the threshold.... Thus the Mahatma, being without desire is outside of the sphere of action of Karma;...

[C.W.XIII, 365]

Many consciously on the long road to the fulfilment of their human existences, the road to human perfection, have tried to avoid the effects of Karma by complete inactivity. The following is a warning to all those who think so:

Not only European Sanskritists but also exoteric Yogis, fall into the grievous mistake of supposing that, ... a human being can escape the operation of the Law of Karma by adopting a condition of masterly inactivity, entirely losing sight of the fact that even a rigid abstinence from physical acts does not produce inactivity on the higher astral and spiritual planes.

[C.W.V, 338]

The aspirant should take note of and heed each of the following paragraphs:

We [theosophists] believe the human body to be but the shell, cover or veil of the real entity; and those who accept the esoteric philosophy and the theory of "Karma" (the universal law of ethical

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causation) believe that the entity, as it travels around certain major and minor cycles of existence with the whole mass of human beings, takes on a different body at birth, and shells it off at death, under the operation of this Karmic law.

[C.W.XII, 302]

Every transgression in the private life of a mortal, is, according to Occult philosophy, a double-edged sword in the hand of Karma; one for the transgressor, the other for the family, nation, sometimes even for the race, that produced him.

[C.W.XII, 385]

Crimes committed in Avidya (ignorance) involve physical but not moral responsibilities or Karma.... But the case of each of you, pledged to the HIGHER SELF, is quite another matter.... consciously you have invoked the divine justice of Karma to take note of your motives, to scrutinize your actions, and to enter up all in your account.... Never again can you force yourself back into the Matrix of Avidya and irresponsibility... And know further that if Karma relentlessly records in the Esotericist's account bad deeds that in the ignorant would be overlooked, yet equally true is it that each of his good deeds is, by reason of his association with the Higher Self, an hundredfold intensified as a potentiality for good.

[C.W.XII, 503-4]

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COSMIC PLANES AND HUMAN PRINCIPLES				
NO.	COSMIC PLANES Common Names May others	HUMAN PRINCIPLES		
		SANSKRIT NAME	ENGLISH NAME	DESCRIPTION
7	<b>AKASHA</b> Spirit-Substance	ATMA	SPIRIT	Ultimate Dynamism Life or Spirit (Astract) Seat of Consciousness
6	<b>ALAYA</b> Universal Soul	BUDDHI	VEHICLE OF SPIRIT	Plus Spirit =Life Effective. The Monard. Inherent in everything. Prime Duality.
5	<b>MAHAT</b> Universal Mind	HIGHER MANAS LOWER	HIGHER MIND	Orientates towards (7) and (6) Astract though, Intuition, Unity.
			LOWER MIND	Orientates towards (1) to (4) Personal Mind, Ordinary Thoughts
4	<b>KAMA</b> Universal Energy	KAMA	DESIRE Passion	Driving Energy. Will at lower octave. The Motivator. Has higher and lower octaves.
3	Formative Principle Within-Without	LINGA SARIRA	ASTRAL BODY	Non-physical material form body (Morphic). Collector and reservoir of Life Force (Prana), vital body.
2	<b>LIFE FORCE</b> in Everything	PRANA	LIFE FORCE	Vitality, without which a body is dead.
1	Densest Substance ( PRAKRITI )	STHULA SARIRA	PHYSICAL BODY	Means of perception and action at physical level. Vehicle for expression of all human faculties.

### EPILOGUE

In the *The Key to Theosophy* (p 204) H.P.B. tells a story of a lady who had occasionally visited Hampstead Heath north of London and also its East End. Hampstead Heath she found a delightful place with open skies, fresh air, trees and flowers but the East End was the exact opposite: terrible poverty, squalor, noxious smells, with children scratching a living there as best they could. She came to the conclusion that its social problem was too big and not much could be done about it. She did, however, take some flowers to one of the children's school. They were a source of great delight. The story illustrated the lady's genuine concern for the children and her willingness to do something to alleviate their lot.

This kind of squalor, in western cities at any rate, has become a thing of the past. Social reformers, local governments and even national governments have made the necessary provisions to clean up slum areas with new or renovated buildings, proper sanitation, running water, etc. and provided schools for even the most deprived children. The grinding poverty of the people and its consequence disease, misery and generation deprivations which were prevalent at the time of H.P.B.' story have been virtually eliminated.

Things have changed. Now, even in the case of world-wide disasters like wars and natural catastrophes massive aid is now quickly available thanks to the initiatives of large international charitable organizations and the more affluent countries. The public conscience has been awakened and much has been done to alleviate suffering on a wide scale. Nevertheless there are still areas relatively untouched, of child abuse and exploitation. Moreover, large tracts of the world are being deprived of their natural resources at an alarming rate. All these things will necessarily incur a Karmic reaction. The social one will react into the conditions both ecological and those affecting most people on the planet and will affect not only the physical but the inner worlds, notably the elemental kingdoms. Karma will restore balance or harmony sometime and in some way. The way is not predictable but it is inevitable. All the extracts comprising this work confirm the inexorable workings of the Law, for good or ill.

The matter of waste is one that surely must be addressed soon by the civilized and better-off countries of the world. Present practices are unconscionable, i.e., the profligate use of energy in electric signs, the lavish use of heating and air-conditioning in properties is taken for granted. Humanity behaves as if there were no tomorrow. Waste of good food as garbage, waste of natural resources, e.g., in terms of massive, largely unread newspapers and magazines, use up the natural resources of the earth faster than they can regenerate. In the matter of food production it is said that it takes ten times as much vegetable fodder to feed to animals for meat than it does to provide that same value food direct for human consumption. In view of the ever-lessening of supplies and the continual increase in world population the lesson of the optimum use of food stuffs and other resources must sooner or later be learned.

Our present survey of how the Law works indicates that it is all-mighty and unerring. It can never be stayed in its course towards harmony and equilibrium. We flaunt it at our peril. We do this out of pure ignorance. We are motivated by unthinking greed. Nevertheless, we have to learn that we cannot continue our ruthless exploitation of Nature. We are ourselves a part, we cannot continue our ways without dire penalty both in the short and the long term. All our activities in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, not to mention the human, involve the Elementals in the invisible worlds directly,

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thereby affecting all the other planes. The disturbances we cause, both good and bad, at these levels, necessarily have their effects at physical level. Nature has to be accorded a due respect. We must awaken to our responsibilities, start thinking and grant her a proper concern. We interfere with her exquisitely balanced processes at a potentially enormous cost to our own welfare and happiness.

So much for our environment. As far as humanity is concerned let us end by repeating the passage from S.D.I, 643:

With right knowledge, or at any rate with a confident conviction that our neighbours will no more work to hurt us than we would think of harming them, the two-thirds of the World's evil would vanish into thin air.

Is such a faith really beyond our achievement? We could try to be ever mindful of it, both as regards ourselves and our world when, as we have seen, both are in the deepest sense One.

In conclusion here is a quotation at the end of an article by H.P. Blavatsky, "Our Cycle and the Next" (May 1889):

If Theosophy prevailing in the struggle, its all-embracing philosophy strikes deep root into the minds and hearts of men, if its doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma, in other words, of Hope and Responsibility, find a home in the lives of the new generations, then, indeed, will dawn the day of joy and gladness for all who now suffer and are outcast. For real Theosophy IS ALTRUISM, and we cannot repeat it too often. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to Truth. If once men do but realize that in these alone can true happiness be found, and never in wealth, possessions, or any selfish gratification, then the dark clouds will roll away, and a new humanity will be born upon earth. Then, the GOLDEN AGE will be there, indeed.

[C.W.XI, 202]

But if not, then the storm will burst, and our boasted western civilization and enlightenment will sink in such a sea of horror that its parallel History has never yet recorded.