

Evolution and the Monad

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I HAVE chosen the phrase "Evolution *and* the Monad" rather than "the Evolution *of* the Monad" because the Secret Doctrine teaches us that the Monad is independent of evolution, that it is, as it were, the stationary centre around which our being revolves and develops. To understand this idea in all its bearings, we must first realize, at least to some extent, the idea of the Unity of Spirit, of "the fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-soul", itself but one presentment of that Absolute which is quite beyond the range of our thought, but is symbolised in the *Secret Doctrine* (Volume 1, Page 14) under two aspects: absolute abstract Space, and absolute abstract Motion, representing Unconditioned Consciousness, for it is impossible to conceive of consciousness apart from change, and motion best symbolises change. This aspect of the one Reality is also symbolised by the term "the Great Breath", wherein we pass from absolute negation to that conception of duality embodied in the contrast of Spirit and Matter, or the two aspects of the Absolute which complete the metaphysical trinity and form the basis of conditioned Being. This, as being the root from which all manifestation proceeds, is, on the one hand pre-cosmic Ideation (or Abstract Intelligence before the conception of the Universe), the origin of all force, all intelligence, and all individual consciousness, while, on the other hand, it is pre-cosmic Substance, the substratum of all the varying grades of matter. It is easily seen that upon these two aspects of the Absolute depends the existence of the manifested, Universe, for, apart from Cosmic Substance, Cosmic Ideation could not manifest as individual consciousness, since a physical basis is necessary to self-consciousness, while, apart from Cosmic Ideation, Cosmic Substance would remain an empty abstraction. The one would be like soul without body, the other like body without soul. The manifested Universe, therefore, must be pervaded by duality, that idea which the Hindus constantly symbolise as "the pairs of opposites", and this idea necessitates the conception of the link uniting Spirit and Matter, that mysterious Divine Energy by which the "ideas" of Universal Mind are impressed on Universal Matter as "the laws of Nature", the life-principle of the world.

Given this duality, this consciousness implying change, that law of periodicity, of ebb and flow, which exists throughout all departments of physical nature, must necessarily pervade the Universe, eternal as a whole, forever changing in its parts. [Page 25]

Now if we have an abstract Consciousness which only a union with a physical basis can individualise into a *self*-consciousness, the consciousness that "I am I", we see the reason for what is called the "Cycle of Necessity", or Incarnation, the pilgrimage of every soul, every spark of the Universal Over-Soul, through the process of evolution back to its Divine Origin. No such soul, we are told, can acquire conscious – that is, independent — existence until it has passed through every elemental form of such a cycle, and has acquired individuality first by natural impulse, and then by self-induced and self-devised efforts, as a vine would raise itself from the ground, first by the life-impulse imparted to the germ, and then by the constant up-reaching and clinging of its tendrils to higher and higher points. So must the individual ascend through all degrees of being, from the potential consciousness of the mineral to the highest form of the archangel,

but with no privileges or special gifts save those won by his own effort.

So much for the general law: now to examine a little into the process. We have first, according to the *Secret Doctrine* (Volume 1, Page 614), to realise the difference between THE MONAD, the Universal Unit, and the Monads, or the manifested Unity, the Greek *Monas* signifying "Unity" in its primary sense. The Monads are not discrete principles, limited or conditioned, but rays from that one universal *absolute* Principle, the "Universal Unit" referred to above. They are, in other words, part of the Universal Consciousness, individualised by combination with a physical form, just as a portion of the water of the ocean can only be individualised, or separated from the rest, by being enclosed with certain limits. That ray, then, of the Divine Intellect which is to become a human soul, and complete its pilgrimage by returning to the source from whence it sprang, follows of necessity the same cycle of evolution as the rest of the manifested Universe. But at the same time we are warned not to think that it is this Monad itself which becomes man, for it stands to reason that a ray from the Divine cannot either progress or develop, or even be affected by the changes of state through which it passes. "It is not of this world or plane", says the *Secret Doctrine* (Page 1, Page 164). " and may be compared only to an indestructible star of divine light and fire, thrown down to our earth as a plank of salvation for the personalities in which it indwells. It is for them to cling to it, and thus partaking of its divine nature obtain immortality". Furthermore we are cautioned not to think of a Monad as a separate entity, passing through all the Kingdoms of nature to blossom into man at last, an atom of horn-blende, for instance, finally becoming a Humboldt. Instead of speaking of "a mineral monad", we should speak of *the* Monad, or the Universal Energy, manifesting in that form of cosmic matter called the mineral kingdom. It is Intelligent Consciousness, in fact, passing through seven planes; first, three elemental planes, or nascent centres of forces; then the [Page 26] mineral kingdom, forming the turning-point in the evolution of consciousness, where it becomes wholly latent, its envelope being at its densest, most material stage; then the three stages of organic life, the vegetable kingdom (the second degree of awakening sensation), the animal, the human. "The total obscuration of spirit is the complete perfection of its polar antithesis, matter". Therefore we see that "it is the spiritual essence which properly constitutes the Monad, not the atomic aggregation, which is only the vehicle and the substance through which thrill the lower and the higher degrees of intelligence." (Volume 1, Page 179). From all this it becomes plain (as we are told upon page 189) that "there exists in Nature a triple evolutionary scheme, or rather three separate schemes of evolution, which in our system are inextricably interwoven and interblended at every point. These are the spiritual (or Monadic), the intellectual, and the physical evolutions".

The spiritual evolution is concerned with the growth and development of our spiritual faculties in conjunction with the intellectual, represented by "the solar ancestors", or givers of intelligence and consciousness"; and the physical (concerned with the transformations of the body) represented by the "lunar ancestors", the givers of our physical form.

This physical form has changed its external shape and density with every sub-race; as the form and physical structure of the fauna of the globe has changed with the ever-varying conditions of its different geological periods. In the *Commentary* (*Secret Doctrine*, Volume 1, Page 184) we are told that in the beginning the internal or astral man was then the external man, and his form evolved from within outward, like the lotus, whose external shape assumes gradually the form of the model within itself. But in the present age, the human embryo follows in its transformations all the forms that the physical frame of man had assumed during the three cycles of unconscious material development, and it is a plant, a reptile, an animal before it finally becomes man, evolving in his turn, within himself, his own ethereal

counterpart.

This is the physical evolution, following the universal law of progress from the spiritual through the material back to the spiritual again.

Now the intellectual evolution depends upon the development of our higher mental faculties and their union with the spiritual nature, by which alone they become immortal. The "spirit" in the sense of St . Paul, I. Thess. v., 23, (who divides man into "spirit, soul and body "), being one with the Universal Spirit, as before said, can have no individuality until united with the soul, or Mind. But, as Mr. Keightley said in his address upon the evolution of the Soul, "this is but a breath of the Universal Mind, individualised through its aggregation about the Monad as a spiritual, and the body as a physical, centre". And he goes on to say that from each soul, or, as we might put it, each individual consciousness, "produced by [Page 27] the overshadowing of a physical organism by the Monad, those of its energies, powers, faculties that are in its nature allied to the spiritual, or the Monad, unite with it and form the Re-incarnating Ego; while those allied to the animal nature cling to it, and are dispersed at its disintegration". This idea must have been in the mind of the great adept Paul when he said "Work out your own salvation" (Phil. ii., 12).

The history of the individual is the history of the race; the history of the race is the history of the Cosmos. If the scientist and the poet teach us that —

“This world was once a fluid haze of light,
Till toward the centre set the starry tides,
And eddied into suns, that wheeling cast
The planets; then the monster, then the man;”

the *Secret Doctrine* supplements the nebular hypothesis by showing that the same laws that ruled the destiny of the worlds shaped the development of man, once also, like the earth, a fluid haze". So in the *Commentary* (*Secret Doctrine*, Volume 1, Page 188) we read: "Man, in the first Round and first Race of the Earth, was an ethereal being, non-intelligent, but super spiritual; in each of the subsequent races he grows more and more into an encased or incarnate being, but still preponderatingly ethereal". He continued to grow firmer and more condensed in body, a more physical man, but not "the physical man" we know. Yet still "he is less intelligent than spiritual, for mind is slower and more difficult evolution than is the physical frame." With the development of the physical and intellectual, the spiritual declines, until the middle point of the arc is reached, with the Fourth Race, and the spiritual once more begins to climb slowly upward, till, with the Seventh Race, its domination shall be again established. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly " (I. Cor. xv., 45-49). The mention of Races and Rounds involves a short explanation for those not familiar with the terms, which can, perhaps, be best given in an adaptation, or rather condensation, of what Mr. Sinnett has said upon the subject, in the fourth chapter of his *Esoteric Buddhism*, but corrected by the more accurate teaching of the *Secret Doctrine*.

The great tide of human life, then, we are told, sweeps round the whole circle of the globes composing our Earth-chain in successive waves, and each of these waves is called a Round. But the Monad entering upon this pilgrimage does not merely touch each globe of that chain and then pass on, but has

to pass through a series of seven Races upon that globe, each of these races occupying a long time, and having within its limits seven sub-races, that are each again divided into seven branch races. And each sub-race has a certain extra vitality at its climax, which leads it to throw off an additional off-shoot race at that point in its progress, and to [Page 28] develop another at the end, by its dying momentum, so to speak. Moreover each Monad incarnates at least twice in each branch-race, making a total of about eight hundred incarnations, while between each physical existence the individual unit passes through a period of existence in the corresponding spiritual world, thus completing the analogy of day and night, work and sleep, the larger part of the time, however, *as we reckon time*, between one Round, or wave of evolution, and the next, being spent in subjective existence, or Devachan. Four times that great wave of human life has swept over this earth of ours, and we are now in the age of intellectual development, the Fifth Race, and have, therefore, to use the words of the *Secret Doctrine*, "crossed the meridian point of the perfect adjustment of Spirit and Matter, and are cycling onward upon the spiritual side". With each Round some one of the seven "principles" or vehicles of the Divine Spirit in man is especially developed, and *Mind*, as the fifth of these, can only reach its full development in the Fifth, or next succeeding Round. "But as every sub-race and every nation have their cycles and stages of evolution repeated upon a smaller scale". we find some of our sub-races still on the shadowy descending arc of their respective national cycles; while others are at the apex of spiritual development as sub-races (*Secret Doctrine*, Volume 2, Page 301).

According to the diagram given on page 172, Volume 2, and the following explanation, we are shown that the Monads circling round any septenary chain are divided into seven classes. Class I. is swept by the wave of life from Globe A through Globes B, C, D, E, F to Globe G, thus completing its seven Rounds upon the lunar chain. Close upon its heels comes Class II., which enters Globe A just as Class I. passes on to Globe B, and so on with all the other classes and Globes, so we see that by the time that Class VII., the last class, has left Globe A, that Globe begins to die, and in dying transmits its life-energies to the first Globe of a new chain, that of our Earth, in time to accommodate Class I., whose last Round has just been completed upon the last Globe of the Lunar chain, and who have been awaiting their new quarters in the Nirvana or period of planetary rest between the two chains. It is as if a family of seven children began their education by the eldest child's entrance into a school divided into seven grades, each with its appropriate room. The next year the second child enters the first grade, and the first child passes into the second. By the time the seventh child enters the first grade, the eldest child has finished the course, and has a vacation, after which he enters the first grade in a new school.

Now we are told that the function of the "lunar ancestors" is to evolve the astral body, upon which the physical body is built up. The first or lunar chain of globes, then, must be intended, it seems to me, for the evolution of the astral body, and the second, or earth chain, for the [Page 29] evolution of the physical body, for we are told that when the First Class from the Lunar chain enters the first Globe of the Earth-chain, it begins with the lowest kingdom and so on successively. Therefore, it is only this First Class that has time to get through the seven grades and attain the human state of development during the first Round.

Meanwhile the "Solar ancestors" are "the givers of intelligence and consciousness", the fashioners of the inner man. They are called also the Agnishwatha, the Kumaras, the "Sons of Fire", and we are told (Vol. I., p. 87), that they bear the latter name because they are the first beings (or "Minds") evolved from Primordial Fire. "But there are two Fires; the first, or the purely *formless* and *invisible* Fire concealed in the Central *Spiritual Sun*, is spoken of as 'triple' (metaphysically), while the Fire of the manifested Kosmos is septenary, throughout both the Universe and our Solar System." ...The Occult Doctrine rejects the hypothesis born of the Nebular Theory, that the seven great planets have evolved from the central

mass of our visible Sun. The first condensation of cosmic matter of course took place about a central nucleus; but our Sun, it is taught, merely detached itself earlier than the other planets, and is therefore their elder brother, not their father.

We are warned in the *Secret Doctrine* itself that many of the theories therein blocked out are symbols, and that much of even the more esoteric teaching is also purely symbolical, and intended simply as a representation on our plane of what properly belongs to another. It is as if the poetry of Milton or Dante were translated into the picture-language of the early Egyptians. We must be careful, then, how we take these descriptions of globes and chains and so forth as literal astronomical facts belonging to our present visible and material plane, and be ready always to study the higher analogies and relations that these are meant to shadow forth. In any case the material fact always corresponds to an immaterial truth, and it is this that is the really important thing after all; the Kingdom of Heaven is within us, and all education is merely a *drawing-out* of the light within. As Browning says in his "Paracelsus":

"To Know

Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
And source within us, where broods radiance vast."

GRAINS OF CORN

I am he who exalteth the humble and simple mind, and suddenly imparteth to it such a perception of eternal truth as it could not acquire by a life of laborious study in the schools of men. ...I teach in still and soft whispers to relinquish earth, to loathe carnal and temporary enjoyments and sigh for spiritual and eternal, to shun honour and to bear contempt, to place all hope and dependence upon Me, to desire nothing besides Me, and above all, most ardently to love Me. By an intimate and supreme love of Me some have been wonderfully filled with divine knowledge, and spoken truths beyond the comprehension of man; and thus by forsaking themselves, they have found that light to which the most subtle disquisitions of their own minds could not have led them.

To some I speak only of common truths; to others, of those that are singular and exalted. I make myself known to some under the more familiar appearance of human forms, and by a sudden and immediate communication of divine light open the deepest mysteries to others.

THOMAS A KEMPIS

As to those however, O son of *Prithâ* ! who dedicating all their actions to me, and holding me as their highest goal, worship me, meditating on me with a devotion towards none beside me, and whose minds are fixed on me, I, without delay, come forward as their deliverer from the ocean of this world of

death..... That devotee of mine, to whom happiness and misery are alike, who is forgiving, contented, and whose mind and understanding are devoted to me, he is dear to me.

BHAGVAD GITA, *Book 12*.